THE LONDON APHRODITE

edited by Jack Lindsay and P. R. Stephensen

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CONTENTS

		PAGE
ENTER VENUS	*Jack Lindsay*	402
NUDE	*Lionel Ellis*	
BAKUNIN	*P. R. Stephensen*	421
FOUR LOVE POEMS	*Philip Lindsay*	433
NOTE ON THE FORM OF THE NOVEL	*Brian Penton*	434
FOUR FABLES OF LA FONTAINE	*Edward Marsh*	444
DUNG OF PEGASUS. (Part VI)	*Peter Meadows*	447
LUCIFER VISITS PAN	*Bertram Higgins*	457
HAVE WE FREE WILL?	*Albert Parsons Sachs*	458
MOONSTRUCK	*Brian Penton*	463
POETRY AND LIFE	*Jack Lindsay*	464
THE WIDOW OF EPHESUS	*Philip Owens*	488

The six promised numbers have been issued and can now be obtained, bound, for *fifteen shillings*. Orders may be sent to the booksellers or direct to the publishers, THE FANFROLICO PRESS, 5, Bloomsbury Square, London, W.C.1—who have now had their joke.

ENTER VENUS

A Collection of Lyrics
by JACK LINDSAY

REALITIES

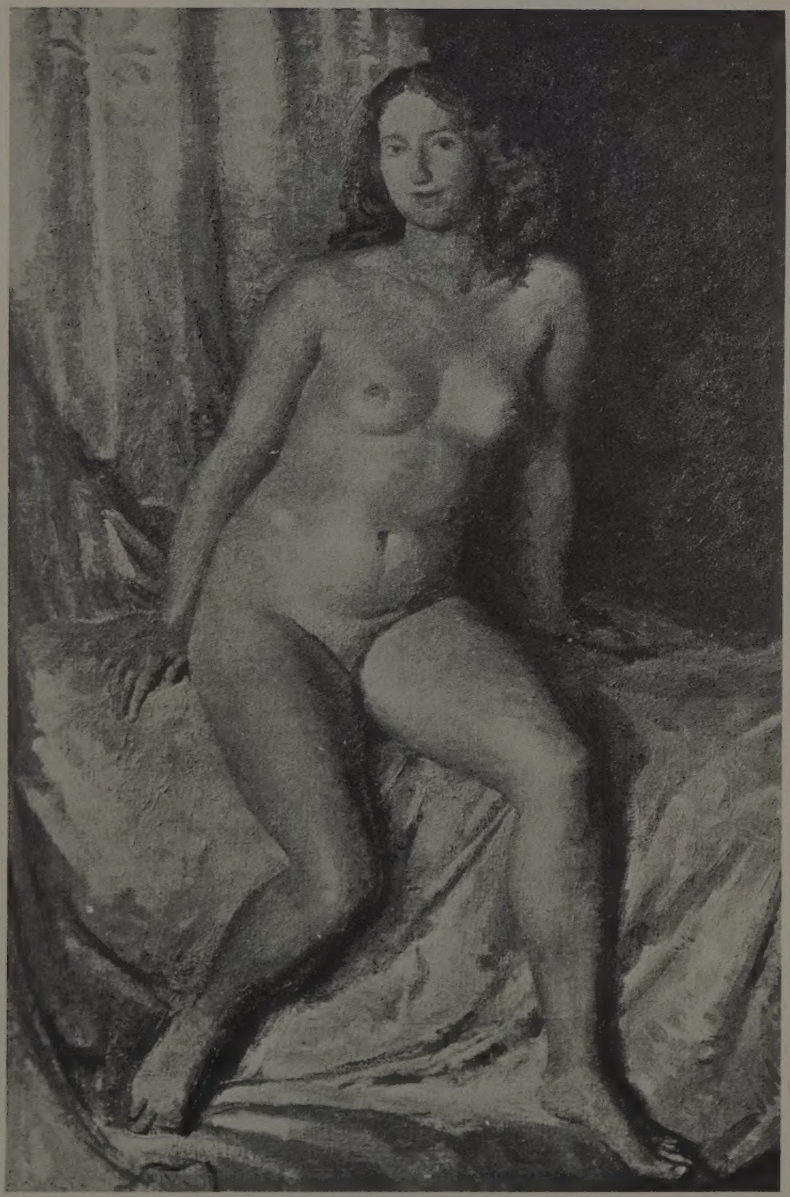
Venus posing for her portrait
to Praxiteles,
wouldn't stand quietly,
insisted on kisses—
nothing else would please her.
Still she kept him hurrying
from marble girl to goddess . . .
Kisses grew wingèd
bells in the wind,
cassia and tumbled light
twined in his mind
rainbows and downy seas,
cloudfeathers from pheasant-suns
sliding down glassy air,
plump pearls and milkberries
trellising dizzily
white zephyrs of love . . .
"Another kiss," pleaded she,
ever unsated.
Half in a dream he bent,
kissing the marble mouth
of his own statue.

EXEGESIS ON POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS

Unicorns above all other beasts
are daintymouthed and will not touch
foods that delight
the most particular of satyrs.
They will not feed on chaff or crusts,
the fastidious creatures rate
calabrian wines with gin and bitters
or foamfroth poured out on the beach.

The only things they truly like
are the gushing lilies of the sun,
the lovelied air
a princess passing by breathed gently—
greedily at her heels they suck—
but syllabubs of kisses they prefer,
and sweetmeats of music hanging faintly
on the thick branches of the light.

Lovers too they wildly love.
With neighing rapture to their tryst
skipping they follow.
There, they gambol all about, they leap,
hornthrusts at the sun they give,
they leap, they leap, they whinny and bellow,
they leap, and leaping will not stop
till the horn rips right out through the sun.



NUDE

Reproduction of painting by Lionel Ellis

ON THE FOOTHILLS OF HÆMUS

THE centaurs gallop at nightfall down the hills,
they set fire to the rocks, chip flame, clipclop, from them,
and slither in a mess of stars in milky pools,
diving for lilycaverns where oreads are hid;
then turn with shining flanks for the dark wood,
and still their hooves stamp a stone to a flying gem:
so exquisite in hearing, each ear tells
whither the girls run by the rimpling bells
of flowers glowing quietly in the gloom
and jarred perfumes in a jingling bud
or the broad carillon that sweetly thrills
where some darknippled girl crouches in a bed
of softening violets and anemones
welling cool robes of scent about each limb.

She saw him where with restless hands he stood,
his eyes dull agates cut in lazy stone,
the moon a frayed jewel in his beard of red,
his great torso flailed with light, and knew her ruse
to throw him off had failed.

A WARNING TO OLD MEN

OLD King Midas lay in bed
in pinching sheets of gold.
Little Myrrha by his side
felt very cold.
A kiss was golden on her mouth,
and the poor girl lay
frozen ruddily in his arms,
a lewd lovely carving.
Her left nipple pertly
turned up as when his touch
fatally grazed it;
her harplike hair made music
under his fingers;
her hand stiffened round his beard
ere she could raise it;
her thighs stroked by metallic death
stayed in the lustrous air—
a shining tremor passed
over her body,
gilding desire and robbing
her last sobbing breath.
There lay the poor girl
shrouded in polisht fire
between two pulses of love.

Midas, baulked, took the gawd
once was quick Myrrha,
kissed it fiercely and hurt his lip.
"Ah, could I touch the sun
into a death of gold,
leave all the earth and stars
glittering and cold."

WASTE

" To buy a garter
with a girl inside it
is an expensive hobby,"
to Melusine said Robin.

The water cast upwards
films of worsted green
over her belly sliding :
spidery threads
of pale light tressèd like
a Nereid's
uncombed locks
washing to and fro
in a watergossamer beside
honeytinted rocks.

" Don't dive yet," he said,
" you still have your stockings on ! "

" But they sleek my mermaid legs
with glossy flames of water,
they crinkle with running scales,
they hide my human toes,
and web my feet till I
am the rivergod's daughter."

" But they cost guineas to buy,"
cried Robin in anguish ;
but Melusine was gone,
that gartered Mermaid.

HALF ASLEEP

THE satyrs lie in the forks of the trees
with the hamadryads.

They are so lazy they let the breeze
shake them vaguely ; they kiss at ease,
for the wind has a strenuous time to shake
festival leaves and the dreamy knees
of the girls, smooth as the light that lies
on the other side of a lilypetal :
to keep awake
the embrace nodding half way through.
Bees seek the flowers in their hair,
and tease their eyelids open on
the tickling tresses of the skies,
dove's feathers of the plumaged air,
and all the stroking fleece of blue.
These hightoned sheens feed sleep and fondle
languor blown in the blood's bells
of drowsy dreams sheathed in the metal
music smithies in the mind
beating sweethewn ecstasies
to mail of pearl and a shield of crusted fire,

beauty's panoplies,
like sunlight quarrying in cleft seas.

The boughs creak in the wind,
but the satyrs do not wake.

THE CAPTIVE

THE satyr chuckled, mid the spiny growth
of lunatick briars, combing with a thorn
his honeydabbled beard.

"O let me go,"
the Duchess pleaded, piteous and low,
dabbing the crescent patch back on her cheek;
and catching her skirt up, jauntily forlorn,
with rosy rags she struggled to get out.
"Release me, and I give to you my Oath
a thousand Masses for your Soul I'll say."

The satyr chuckled, rooting round about,
then lifting up a trailing portal, showed,
cool with roofed scents, a snugly grassed abode.

"What is it, rustick *Monster*, that you Seek?
I'll have you breeched in Sattin, with Silver buckled . . .
Leave me . . ." Slowly the satyr tugged her dress,
slowly she put on her tall nakedness,
while the flowers wagging scents against her hair
leered with smeared orris through the softening air.

She pleaded, "Brutish heathen, go away."
naked with topless wig.
The satyr chuckled.

CINEMATOGRAPH

THE orchestra tuning twitters through the leafy
noises of excited boys and girls
that are as the rolling burr of an unctious organ
with a surge of paddling cherubin, subdued bellow
of God's puffing wrath, or the fading echoes
of a rubbercheeked comedian in the eaves
or ranters of heroic couplets rumbling,
jaunty hellenic helm on curls of candlelight,
a wistful rustle of mothy fustian.

Blue eyes, pools of a frozen sky that has trapped
no god in azure ice for summer to thaw
(They stare down on kisses, coldly amorous, unpuzzled.
No caress melts in their aloof lasciviousness . . .
That kiss . . .
surely that kiss . . .
languidly she accepts them all.)
A pastelvirginity brushed rosilybluely
by some Louis Quinze painter sapped
after a week's debauch with redhaired wenches,
running up and down stairs and bathing them for fun
in soapy tubs to make them squeal like birds.

Shall I offer her chocolates or an icecream soda?
Anything else would be an insult to the bower
of rigid tinlilies the five melancholic angels
hold over the gold of her byzantine hair.

The lights burst into darkness with a smack of brass,
the violins bring swooning reassurance,
grey men start falling down ladders on a screen,
and I take her hand.

TWO INTO ONE

Critias was drunk and said,
"Which is the taller of you two?
is it you, Lais? or you Phryne?
stand there back to back and let me see."
Shoulder topped shoulder,
and head crested head,
back curved away from back
to meet with soft urgence . . .
No difference at all
could his eye find as it dropped
from the curled heads to small feet . . .
rubbed with the cressetlight
like falling silks always falling,
rippling bubbles that never break,
from head filleted with threaded light
to foot sandaled with light's dim roses,
two girls tied with tasseled fire
tighter drawn and tighter:
flesh ghosting into light
that sleeked into flesh:
flesh like snow flickering
through the hands of light. . . .
"Come to my arms," he said,
saw with relief
the sheaf of light unmeshed
and two naked girls.

MIRAMONT AND THE SUN

Demure as mignonette your air
as, sipping tea, in that large chair
you draw light through the curtains. . . .

till I hold breath, expect to see
that crystallising alchemy
freeze you to frailest porcelain,
the blossomy light absorb again
the body it gave, and there remain
this icy and translucent you,
tinged with the faintest rose and blue,
a shell of stony fire alone
to tell of her who thence had flown—
paste filagree your ribboned dress,
flower of light turned shepherdess!

Ah, just in time I see you rise
out of the smoothly magic skies,
quite safe; and as you move you shake
furbelows of lustre in your wake,
and uncrease all this coat of light
enamelling you upon my sight.
You are alive . . . that's very true . . .
Miss Lucy, may I sit by you?

JEALOUSY

"Kiss me, kiss me," Helen murmured.
It was a dream that cried.
Dreams were kisses, so I as well
my luck with dreams tried.

But alien was the warmth that opened
languor in that kiss . . .
Whose vizard of dreams am I, and what
country is this?

Sunjangled trees flow overhead,
flowers bubble below.
Birds sparkle from leaves, and trail feathers
of foam as they go.

The lark sports amid mealy clouds
in his loft of air.
His songs unthreaded swing and trip
down many a beamy stair.

Harpies of silence catch and rend them
halfway down to ground . . .
Though I searched keenly, not one jewel
was ever found.

. . . Goldilocks giddy girl
growing guineas on a tree,
and the conjuror-sun takes them
endlessly from your hair
Give one to me
Paris how do you like me bare?
with honey of the sun
you dear little sweaty thing
isn't it fun?
Antony your beard is scratchy
I've just come in from battle
I killed eleven men
the twelfth is dying
kiss me before he's dead
he's hiding underneath the bed
and his groans cool my hair
as you kiss me I don't care
Isolde naked all but one flute
asked why aren't there pools of kisses
lilied with moonlight and my drowned flesh
and then it is the satyrs' turn
but send the centaurs away
After you, said Byron:

The more I kiss the less you're mine ;
it isn't fair.
I'll not mime the Insatiate Princes
of your dreams' bedchambers
here, wake up ! wake up !

[*Written* 1924]

PERHAPS THERE IS SOME HOPE FOR EARTH AFTER ALL

I LIKE at the streetcorner waiting
for the last tram, to guess
by the number and the manner of the creases
on each girl's dress
which come stained by moonlight,
which come from being meekly
patted by edifying Aunts
and ballads antiquely treacly.

It takes some time to comb moonlight from the hair ;
wisps cloud with colour yet,
skysilver straggling from under a fiveshilling hat.
Only I see it there,
only I look
for mutinous naiads in muslin
who have floated the moon in a brook,
who have kissed in a race of silver
and crumpled their blouse at the back.
I can see where his hand caught it—
It is difficult, I know,
in this cursed city to go
far enough away in one night
for the girl to get naked, quite.
So she must submit
to dresses torn a bit,
and ladders in stockings—these
morning calamities.

I am the Usher of Aphrodite Pandemos
seeing Lovers back into their tram,
who come from the Bedroom of a Kiss.
The stammering tenderness that hues
bodies well imbued with kisses tinges
the edges of their smiles.
O all the mysterious laughter that's in the world !
my loneliness shrugs with a dim sweet tartness
of joys exhaled about me, untouched yet known :
moonlight filtered through kisses, lazy lovers
in all the draggled bushes of earth's winds,
defying cowdung and invasive pebbles :
the young eternity of prophesying sibyls
behind the Veil, the Petticoat of Heaven,
rent, and Beauty's babble seething silence.

For me these lovers take tram or bus or ferry
from the semidetatched Cottages of their lives
to wade in kisses.

For me their loveliness
fumes in the Paddocks of Spring's furtive estate,
hedged in with policemen and advertisement-hoardings.
For me,
for me their laughter feeds the sparkle of thought
that dews the hammered flowers of poetry
frosted on heaven's windows. For them alone
I think it worth while to put shoulder to
the bogged cart of earth, in the slight hope
to jog it on to uplands elmed with beauty
for Pastoral Gods to ride among its hay.

I am Priapus snuffling up the scent
of young bodies drowned in an air of kisses:
blind stone warmed by this flushed wind of spring.
Lovers that love unseen, untouched by me,
in this Paddock fuming with spilt laughter,
I take your scent, the sunlight of your bodies,
through these dull senses of stone.
That is enough;
you give to me courage of desire.

Soon no doubt the kisses will fade,
the moonflames grow duller
before the encroaching suburbs.
"Mother will be waiting up for me.
That's the last kiss
. . the last
. . . the very last. . . ."

But you will have left an effigy
in memory behind:
a ghost washing down the centuries,
kind to later lovers in that place;
and you will have left a wind
of dear and reckless graciousness
courteous in my soul.

Ah, here's my tram.

LISTENING TO A GRAMOPHONE IN THE SUBURBS

The scratch of silence's nail upon the mind
faded in fans of colour waved over
beauty sunken, a statue leaded with moonlight.
Some sigh was drawn across a carnival
grown sleepy with a kiss. Have you forgotten?
The lanterns of the wind were all alight
in the dark sky of trees,
and lovers toying with a kiss
lay sweating at their ease . . .
kisses like brooches tried on by cavilling girls,
toykisses, where lovers are children . . .
yes, you, dear child.
Music spread out in a great gem of scent
intaglioed with lovers. Nothing was anywhere

but a scent darkening to foliage
where moonlight spurted into statues of beauty
blown out by laughter, gone in starry puffs,
and nothing was left but the dark garden of music
and in it nothing but a caverned glow
incensed within the templed darkness hung
over the colour waved from ladies' fans.

Then through this dome of expanding music crashed
stridently an electric train.
Straight down the path of huddled flowers it roared with metal
streamers:
music snapped
in torn threads of angry silence, down clattered the stars
bumping on roofs of galvanised iron. Wailing
the lovers were all run over,
the birds of kisses squeaking
twittered off through sunsets drained abruptly
as though the plugged sun was whisked out of air.

We sat waiting.

The noise scattered away, and again slowly came
painfully through bruised quiet the wind of ladies' fans
laden with coloured warmth, unrolling moonlight;
and there was nothing at all anywhere
but Beauty opening, the delicate grain of Music,
and Lovers shadowed with rich scents.

LOVER OF HELEN

I HAD just written a play
about *Helen* beautiful as vintages of music
drained by mænads. I
stood at the tramstop, looked around me
at the girls who would not catch my eye.

Fat girls . . . thin girls . . . not one here
has sucked with greedy hot lips
one drop of that fermented music which
from Helen's memory drips

upon the upturned faces of
men walking lonely through
the lovely terrible forest of dreams
amid the firefly dew.

And I whose mind is satiate
with grapes of clustered chords
crusht in the vat of my mind
by satyrs, by brownlegged goddesses—
as I look about, I find

that I would take that fat girl with a hole
in her stocking as large as a penny,
or that thin girl with long flat breasts—I know
I'd take any.

CONFESSIONS

Two girls are talking like a hundred
birds in the next room, and I
listen to the sparrows of gossip and try
to write a poem idly.

My kisses are domesticated
in the body of one of these.
There's a wild bird in the other's eyes; no pleas
can arrest it, it is uneasy.

Alighting laughter and the blosmy
glitter of wings like unsheathed flowers.
They have been talking in there now for hours:
the weather is rather showery,

shoes spoilt, mutual hats, and what Julian
said she said or was said to say, that way, then this:
scandal's interminable hypothesis.
There is no hope left of kisses . . .

And I cannot write of Venus feeding
the satyrbaby at her own breast
(milk of kisses, milky beauty, O the beautiful girl Venus)
the nipple between her two forked fingers presst.
  You Voices full of jingling teaspoons
  and such surprising birds,
  how can I knead from words
  brightly patterned moons
  to get mixed up with the kisses of
  Semiramis
  and a tall negro, look! so tall
  the woolly moonlight makes him
  appear as big as the whole bed
  while her littlefinger wakes him . . .
when you keep tinkling, small in air, all over me
bells of a malicious femininity?

and all that I can search for
in my mind is a workable plan
for half an hour alone with one of you . . . ah, which one?
  Down, dreams!

I hear her laughter saying good-bye.
Shall I come out for a moment too?
No. Let her go.
What's the good of stammering an inane adieu?
The door shuts, and it seems
a gust of quiet tumbles through the place
        hot to my face,
and my mind rings with silence, and a door
somewhere in me shuts for evermore.
Well, now at least there is nothing to try
but poetry.

"Dear, would you like some afternoon tea?"

"Yes, please, bring it in. I'm working,"
I answer prudently.

II

All women like me, save a few
who don't appreciate
my pathetic ways; but only one or two
proffer any substantial return, even a kiss.

Yet perhaps these very girls I calumniate
dreamfrank whisper (this is what pains me),
"How sillily cold and clumsy and slow he is. . . .
maybe he disdains me."

III

O harsh world full of Mistresses that seek
for lonely poets garreted in Rhyme,
and Poets waiting, ready to accept
an R.S.V.P. from Venus any time—

Just a postcard from God about once a week
giving some literary Whore's address,
that's all I ask. It's so easier to talk
of art than jazz, snakeskin shoes, love, the weather, food,
and her next dress.

IV

I walked along the street. I saw her mouth.
And as we talked, I did not hear a word.
I watched the slow words coming on her mouth
out of a rocketting silence crashed with trams.
This silence was of rubber, noise rebounded
about its shaken surface, bruised the grain
of beautiful quiet stained warm on her mouth.
Sound rang through, but the silence remained intact.
Noises were fishes swimming in liquid peace,
impotent to leave a trace upon
the meeting edges of unrecording mind.

And as we seemed to talk, I saw her mouth.

V

An oyster cocktail, she decides.
For the thirteenth time I feel
the note in my pocket, jotting up rapid
arithmetics of social shame.

Château Margaux. A la Carte,
deriding all expense, we dine.
A Bellygoddess, the menu she scans,
her eyes with spiritual rapture shine.

Then we talk of many things, I answer
Yes to each vapid observation.
Stomachic our fancies rove, but we
keep to the table-d'hôte of conversation.

VI

I could not hear her laughter, for she
sat in the next compartment of the tram
(as in a tank, an aquarium
of electric light where plumes of silk
scarf smokily the brimming quiet) . . .
but stuck in silence her laughter stayed
like a rose buoyed up on sunlight.

I heard its warmth, globed bell-like perfume,
break as though a flower were a bubble
blown by Venus out of kisses
any young girl's nail could prick;
and so a rose at the next moment
might break into a smudge of scent
and an ooze of draining music.

This rose of silence, bellvoiced sweetness,
hanging from the mind's webbed sky,
gasped its tinkle of struck beauty,
then into rimless warmth did die.

But she was pulling her friend's ringlets out,
talking all the while in her aquarium of silence,
shyly, merrily vain; and I
was recollecting I had only 1*s.* 6*d.* in my pocket,
ashamed to catch the lewd kindness of her eye.

VII

I thought Spring's Towers in the skies
were crystal casements opening wide
with shattering flowers of the sun,
birds stuffed with bursting straws of song
exploding on the air,
girls balconied in love,
kisses for everyone,
and restless foamy blossoms
turning sunlight to a milky blue
under your hair.
I thought one violet could put out the store
of a Queen's perfumes—aye, and more.
I thought to hear the moonstruck tales
of at least a thousand nightingales.

Now I who thought to find so much:
forests of roses in the plucking sun,
and naiads scattering in every pool
panicky as wild ducks: am become content
only to find and touch
in my penurious joy
some little tinklybell
and ask you for its name
and hear you, over its insignificance bent,
answer, "I do not know, dear, what it is . . .
lad's-love, meadowsweet, or love-in-a-mist . . ."
choosing lovely names because you like the sound;
and proud with ignorant beauty look up to be kisst,
so sure of the kiss.

[*Written* 1925]

TO ONE UNPOSSESSED

As many rhymes as I have kissed I have rhymed
kisses as many times as I have kissed with rhymes and
rhymed my kisses and you hidden deeper yet
dear in arabesques and kisses recklessly
twined and yet the twangled suck of gold
witheld because you quickly and designedly
succumb too late and so escape wittily
the gust of laughter's luck that stamps the sun
like an armour of kisses ribbed to beauty
over your flesh and clamps on light's webs
with shaping flashes of you gushed to roses
wimpled with some flirting
oddness of you bending, with a fan, through music—
swinging you past a drench of stars a jingle
of trinket moons into a spray of spangled
constellations clashed in the belfry of a kiss
pealing with poems tissued as many as our kisses
on your mouth those poems enamoured of red
all I have kissed and sung, and yet no luck.

Lying violeteyed and more and drowsy lashes,
always woken by violent discussions
O I meant . . . O let . . . I wish you'd . . . hush now . . .
always the trance broken just as curl-lipt sighing
you shut eyes, lay there soft but at the sly stroke
of love's mad noon the footsteps *O I couldn't . . .*
(*you know*) . . . *not this week* . . . you were always a liar
and I always wrote bad poems about you:
that I couldn't forgive you, though your eyes
turned violet brimming in my kisses' covert
and with beauty I moted the air to float you
on heaven, wetwalled silence, great chimes of silver.

Still I shall get you sometime, you'll succumb yet,
when Death comes crowning me the Fiery King I am,
some borderforage of the spheres will toss you
mine; with lordly love I'll lug you off,
sadheart, rape my poems back again from
your mouth, unrhyme the kisses all my lost poems
wetting your mouth with highlights and my kisses
you little violeteyed and lying ghost.

AN AFTERNOON WITH BEAUTIFUL SOULS

Silence said Baa, and Baa-baa
white sheep pallid rock grisly with foam
Lifted the white rock streaming
pale with death
I tried
Fountains of frozen bone
to brush
The cataracting
foam away
From chalky air baaing through darkness

But I had left my brush and comb at home
My hair fell over my eyes
Black sheep! the nurseries said
        And I replied
The raw red face of silence
bleeding through stained lamplight
Lifts agonising scraped flesh
is this the way to die?
      red bled red fear why
but those the stone sheep cropping
The barren fields of herbless death
To bleach bones gnawed by God
        Stamp them out
Banged by life's dark rhythms catcalls
Hope at last and whisky
More than Christ's blood delight
of the crowing sun
Resurrection from silence bleeding white to
tramp on life's face put it out
        No says the sun
Not the sad face bleeding at my fingertips
But life splashed from swamps of sunlight
clashed with brass

HERE'S THE WHISKY

SWEETBELLIED moon your light O all this music
crushed like a scent that's crystalled in our kiss
O dust of music blown in satined moonlight
gorgeously to drape the air and sweatily
        run down my forehead . . .
The drum's dry rattle swigs the kegs of music,
the silky dew of sprinkled violins;
with tissues of frayed silver laughter hues it.

A miracle! the music glows
about my face,
Saint of Dionysos haloed
with the rays of music twining
fingers in my hair
and curling it
into vine-tendrils—
I crush a strand
of my hair matted with kisses
and find sap on my fingers
        lovely girl
slam silence quickly
here's the whisky
on stairs hewn from the moon we stand,
your body heavy with love
steadily love from my kisses into
your body flows
I and the heady drip of music
kiss and your body grows
heavily into my arms

leaded with sleepy laughter dully
happy lapsed sweet limbs
and your nerveless hand
gloved with warm music hanging
lazy stone soaked at my side
molten in moonlight listen:

The drumtaps bump like a wooden gnat trying
to get outside the mesh of chords the piano
throws above it; there's no whisky left.
Come nearer the lamps of the music,
I want to see your face
dance now dance now
upon the heaving carpet of the music,
tilt up the bowl of noise
and spill it on us, spill
the music down my neck;
I want to feel it next my skin.
dance now dance now
are you thirsty? there's no whisky
but the music is fermented with your kiss
dance now dance now dance
dance!

TWILIGHT

Pull down the blind and bring
this twilight of kisses: pull
love down over the mind
and shut out people passing.
Pull down the blind.

O that this kiss might be
a silence enduring and strong
to shut out for ever
men the faceless noises
endlessly passing along.

Give me your mouth and draw
love down over the mind.
Let the world suddenly die—
pull down the blind.

FEAR

O but this wind
will set the stars nodding
and tapping on the windowpane,
and our quiet kisses be
frightened again.

You cannot shut out this wind;
it will get in
to blow out the fire inside
rubies those lanterns of stone—
come let us hide.

[*Written* 1926]

COURAGE

I can be brave, alone.
Once conquer the sweet need
of crazy tenderness
and it is easy, more or less.
That is why Beethoven was so brave
despite the dropsy splashing from his belly
into his fingertips,
but never mingling with the blood of music.
This is my latest excuse.
I am a coward now
because I look at you
and think of grocers and menstruation,
but in a little while I also
will be sitting dazed
among the brazen swords; and then
I shall rise up alone, and brave.

LA GROSSE MARGOT IN THE NINETEEN TWENTIES

No more no more and yet gashed while I stare
the sleeking instinct like a tide of bells
sucks and for honey gluts the ribs of air
one blob of ecstasy through scratches swells
This hell is the least hell of all the hells
across the figment of my wriggling loss
umbilical to Beauty? or the Cross?
I need you vital little bitch your mirth
starrily wet or just a sugar floss
Is earth a brothel? or a brothel earth?

Clucks and like money that we cannot spare
dining upon our wit my terror quells
blenching to drench an inch of anxious hair
I give and lose I cry across her yells
Who is it buys and Who is it that sells?
soft pendulations spent in sweat and dross
and psychologic spirals Here I'm boss
To hell Ten poems Look my flesh and worth
a million more or Why not clickly toss?
Is earth a brothel? or a brothel earth?

Flat says she flirting with her foot and bare
Moon with the dew's dim roots in fumbling smells
Braces will do to beat her if I dare
unroot the glitter that the moonlight spells
whimpering sweetly in the silver wells
Up flip-wide sprawls as though she meant to doss
snores in damp mats and lifting heaves across
when cabbages from their soft thimbled berth
funnel the air with troughs of clammy moss
Is earth a brothel? or a brothel earth?

I need her God her body is a lair
of all the blood's wild malices and there

my flesh can melt and in those vats can share
the animal splendour in its burning dearth
then rise again and know I do not care
get drunk and in my courage still declare
Earth is a brothel and a brothel earth.

[*Written* 1927]

TWO FACES

I. Idealists

Pedants in love, we argue all the day,
but let night ripple our disputes away.
Beyond our kisses, sleep—
beyond our sleep the naked *Rose*, we say,
the crystal shuddering *Deep*.

Back from that Memory now a sunken shore
we ebb. Our two hands reaching for the core
as one, as one have met
and are not hands but the flowerheart evermore—
as one they tremble yet.

Back in a foam of hands we float abed,
of that deep blossom wringing back no shred—
I mourn our fragile power:
even then in the dark our hands have met and bled
back to that instant *flower*.

With morning comes the latticed Argument,
on which the wan Sun climbs: our day is spent
in gradual dismay . . .
Yet, if we halt, we hear that Rose's *scent*
tolled richly, far away.

Love's Truth

Stop crying! I've forgotten why I love,
and while your face is stained I cannot think.
Let us exchange our cruelties awhile;
and then before
you smile once more
in rings of kisses fitting like a glove,
our marital ambitions let us sink.

(She would not speak; and that is why I stroked
her flanks and flattered her, to start again
the sharp coincidence of patiences—
again to find
what is so blind
inside the obvious pathos we invoked,
shivering into sudden bestial pain.)

So we have done with tired sincerity.
Frankly I see you as an image now,

nothing but what I thought out long ago—
and closer yet
I know we'll get
by these adroit clear lies, which make me bow
before my self in you, your self in me.

Dualism

Look in my eyes and love me, and in turn
with clockwork spontaneity I'll burn.
It's easy, while the *Mirror* is our Sky
where images in mute deception die,
and nothing snaps
our prompt embraces but the dinnerbell—
our coronetted Hearts can set no traps
to break this spell.

Yet you are weeping, and I bluster here . . .
Where is the Mirror that should shut out fear?
Who broke it? why? By poetry renewed
unflaccid kisses still can dare the nude—
Yes, there's the guile:
our Mirror is the glazed mercurial *Skies*
changing each day to make us versatile . . .
Look in my eyes.

Surrender

So this is love; if so, what shall we do?
Now fobbed off with eternity we stand,
myself a pulse within the imaged *You*,
for ever putting out a farewell hand . . .
can I withdraw
without submitting to a barren law?

So be it: let me be your heart, and so
rocked on your blood for ever, pump away.
Two *Mes*, they say, upon your eyeballs show,
Two *You*s on mine . . . and thus my eyes display
myself inside
those *You*s; so on, until I'm terrified.

For you and I must endlessly contract
within the other, and that other still
fall narrowing down oneself: a visual fact
now made reality by amorous will.
Then come, perplext,
open our eyes and see what happens next.

Francis Drake Amorist

Now I have rounded void Eternity
and drop back slackly to a broken doze,
what have I done
save circle round my heart, the thudding *Sun*—
wild flesh in streaks and frills of ecstasy
sweating to nebulous archipelagoes?

But though it's over and the rhythm concludes
back to a clot of heat repetitive
and dazed so far
I lean to words and ask you what you are,
to find dark retribution of old feuds . . .
I'll navigate the *Blood* yet, if I live.

Pendulum

Come on then, let us reckon up this love
grown past arithmeticks of nickt desire
into false balances of You and Me
divided after all
by a continuous infinity.
Two scales, we wag: now you, now I above,
and till the sinuous spine has snapt its wire
we'll rise and fall.

Such jars of joy, so many kegs of tears!
I never thought we'd lived together so long
in lockt unflinching gritted frequency—
why not speak up before?
We should have parted while we still could be
thought of as separate from our fawning fears . . .
What can I love if you remove this wrong
I so abhor?

Come then, and let us lately recognise
resentment has no grip when sums are done.
Invert the infinity that must divide
and let it be instead
scorn of the world, our proper rim of pride
wrung out in sparks of flesh round coiling skies . . .
Where is the bung? Joy's tipple is begun,
here on this bed.

Drunkenness

The crest of drunkenness is that pale face
foaming to momentary moons along
huge waterflanks
of the hypothetical and true Embrace
which sucks us into Song
yet gives us wheezy ribs of caking loam
for all our thanks—
it is your *face* to which my swirled heats foam.

How is it then this fury can disturb
the suspended candour of your domestic eyes?
For, tell me please—
if truly this vain babel I could curb,
would you not then despise
my weakness bent to you? Yet you're distresst
because these Seas
carry me on, your face their stormy crest.

[*Written December*, 1928]

BAKUNIN

by P. R. STEPHENSEN

I

Only one man has lived dangerously—Michael Bakunin. While Nietzsche postulated the Fore-runner, here was a fore-runner in deed. "Everything about him was colossal," says Richard Wagner (*Autobiography*), "and he was full of a primitive exuberance and strength."

Candidly enough Wagner adds:

> "I never gathered that he set much store by my acquaintance. Indeed he did not seem to care for merely intellectual men; what he demanded was men of reckless energy. . . . Doubtless I, with my hopes of a future artistic remodelling of human society, appeared to him to be floating in the barren air."

Wagner's account of Bakunin is the best psychologically that we possess. The two were closely associated on the revolutionary committee directing the actual street fighting at Dresden during the 1849 rising. It is Wagner who relates that on this occasion Bakunin was merely supercilious, strolled unconcernedly along the barricades in a frock coat, smoking a cigar; and explained to the enthusiasts that he "found no inducement to take much interest in a revolution conducted in such a slovenly fashion." Bakunin was perhaps the only man who effectively rebuked Wagner's predilection for the Christling, which subsequently oozed out in *Parsifal:*

> "I had just then been inspired by a study of the Gospels (says Wagner) to conceive the plan of a tragedy for the ideal stage of the future, entitled *Jesus of Nazareth.* Bakunin begged me to spare him any details; and when I sought to win him over to my project by a few verbal hints, he wished me luck, but insisted that I must at all costs make Jesus a weak character. As for the music of the piece, he advised me, amid all the variations, to use only one set of phrases, namely: for the tenor, *Off with his head!* for the soprano, *Hang him!* and for the basso continuo, *Fire! Fire!*"

As a further proof that Bakunin was a man of thoroughly sound appreciation, it is only necessary to add that, on hearing Wagner play and sing the first scenes of *The Flying Dutchman,* he at once exclaimed, "That is stupendously fine!" On another occasion, while explaining to Wagner that the annihilation of all civilisation was the goal upon which his heart was set, Bakunin,

> "even while he was preaching these horrible doctrines, noting that my eyes troubled me, shaded them with his outstretched hand from the naked light for a full hour, despite my protestations."

—finally, when Wagner conducted the Ninth Symphony at Dresden in 1849, in the midst of Europe-wide convulsions, Bakunin, banished from Russia, France, and Prussia, and sought

everywhere by the police, walked publicly up the aisle at the close and said to Wagner in a loud voice:

> "If all the music ever written is lost in the world-revolution, we must pledge ourselves to rescue this symphony, even at the peril of our lives!"

This man, Bakunin, walked on the edge of precipices, and is a hero. I have little difficulty in preferring his character to that of, say, the much-esteemed Mr. Stanley Baldwin, whose inane posture of "Safety First" has actually been employed as a sedative to voters in the recent dull Elections in Britain. The Bakunin-principle of action was always "Safety Last." Bakunin is the essential revolutionary, the antithesis of Baldwin. His type is surely not extinct. It must re-emerge, stronger, or the world dies.

II

Bakunin was born in Central Russia, at Premuchino, in 1814. He was a Russian aristocrat, not the only member of that now discredited and dispersed breed who lusted for the larger freedom. At the age of fourteen he was sent to the Military Academy in Petersburg. Three years later he was commissioned an Artillery officer. He should have become a popinjay in the Imperial Guards, but a tiff with the Commandant led to his being drafted to a line regiment, and sent to service in Latvia. Here, in a miserable peasant village, remote from the amenities of society and civilisation which his rank required and his youth craved, he became surly and neglectful of his military duties. The following year (1835) he resigned his commission, and went to Moscow to study philosophy for three significant years.

With characteristic obtuseness, the academic authorities in Russia had at that time forbidden the reading of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot—a good thing too, because all that remained for Bakunin to absorb was the infinitely more soundly revolutionary thought of Fichte, Hegel, and even Feuerbach—considered innocuous, because not French, by the dunderheads of the Czar. Bakunin took the opportunity of becoming the most thorough-going Hegelian who has ever lived. Only a Russian could have plumbed that well of pure idealism without leaving the world of action. Only a "barbarian newly awakened to civilisation" (Wagner's phrase) could have so far absorbed Hegel's abstract dialectic into his own fibres of concrete action as to apply "Negation" and "Overcoming" to the contemporary society in terms of physical destruction and annihilation. An Oxford philosophy "Course" shows that it is possible to "prescribe" Hegel for study merely as an academic exercise—training the mind, or something—but to Bakunin the issue was immediately practical: how to speed up, himself, personally, the negation of Being into an eternally newer synthesis, intensifying the human universal as concrete movement. At this time Bakunin was in daily contact with Alexander Herzen, and together they hammered out the practical consequences of the Hegelian dialectic. Succinctly, in Herzen's words, these consequences were:

> "Death to the old world! Long live chaos and destruction! Long live Death! Place for the future!"

—perhaps as precise a condensation of Hegel's philosophy as it is possible to make.

In 1841, Bakunin went to Berlin, to the fountain-head, to slake his enormous philosophical thirst. He read there for three full terms, and then, at the beginning of the "revolutionary forties," contributed an article to the *German Year Book* which immediately established his reputation in Europe. Prudhon declared in Paris that Bakunin was a monstrosity in his terse dialectic and his luminous perception of ideas in their essence. It was in this article that the Bakunin-principle of action was first clearly enunciated.

> "Let us rely upon the unquenchable spirit of destruction and annihilation, which is the perpetual spring of new life. The joy of destruction is a Creative Joy."

Bakunin was now an avowed social revolutionary. He travelled to Zürich, Berne, Geneva, Brussels, and Paris, where he met Marx, Engels, and Prudhon. News of this scandal reaching the Czar, he was ordered back to Russia.

III

His reply was to publish in the French radical paper, *Reforme*, an article violently attacking the Czar's government. The feud was on. His property in Russia was confiscated, and he was sentenced to perpetual banishment.

Bakunin now issued his famous "*Oration to the Poles*," the first acknowledgment by a Russian of the Polish right to autonomy as a separate branch of the Slav family. To realise the enormity of this offence, remember that Poland was precisely a Russian Ireland, and that Bakunin was a Russian aristocrat. Years later, when he passed in chains through Vilna on his way to sentence in Russia, enormous crowds gathered in the snow-bound streets and knelt with heads bared in a voluntary homage never accorded the Czar. Meanwhile the Czar's government offered a reward of 10,000 roubles to anyone bringing the desperate libertarian to trial in Russia. Bakunin was followed everywhere by Czarist pimps. A request was made to the French government for his expulsion; and Guizot expelled him. He went to Brussels and issued his *Second Oration to the Poles*. Here, too, he spent much time in the company of Karl Marx, who was just issuing the *Communist Manifesto*, beginning with the words:

> "A spectre is haunting Europe, the Spectre of Communism. All the powers of Old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre."

More than twenty years later, Bakunin gives us an account of this meeting between the two master-conspirators:

> "Marx was much more advanced than I was, as he remains to-day (1871); not more advanced but incomparably more learned than I am. I had not yet rid myself of metaphysical

> abstractions, and my socialism was only instinctive. He, though younger than I, was already an atheist, an instructed materialist, a well-considered socialist. . . . We saw each other fairly often, but there was never any frank intimacy between us. He called me a sentimental idealist, and he was right. I called him a vain man, perfidious and crafty; and I, also, was right."

In February, 1848, the Revolution broke out in Paris, a torch to all Europe. Marx and Bakunin both hastened to the storm-centre. In the next twelve months Bakunin rode the whirlwind everywhere at its shifting centre. In April he visited Frankfort, Cologne (where he quarrelled with Marx), Berlin, and Breslau (where he stirred up the headquarters of the Polish conspiracy). In May he attended the Pan-Slav Congress in Prague. He returned to Breslau, then to Berlin, where a decree of banishment from Prussia was pronounced against him. Off he went to Leipsig and worked on the Central Social Democratic Committee. At the end of the year he was organising a revolution in Bohemia.

IV

In 1849 he met Wagner at Dresden, and created a profound impression upon the *maestro*. Wagner regarded his own personal fate as being interwoven with the universal unrest. ("I became conscious of an impulse to give myself up recklessly to the stream of events, no matter whither it might lead.") The majestic appearance of Bakunin and his reputation for dangerousness fascinated Wagner ("My feeling during my intercourse with him fluctuated between involuntary horror and irresistible attraction.") The two men frequently dined and went for long walks together, with circumspection, however, as Bakunin was lying low. Wagner was astonished by the gluttonous (Russian) manner in which Bakunin ate slices of sausage; and, always rather a *bonpère*, was "guilty of the weakness" of explaining the more genteel (or German) manner of eating such comestibles. Bakunin in reply begged to be allowed to eat what was placed before him in his own way. Wagner was also astonished at the way Bakunin gulped down wine in quantity and preferred to get drunk quickly on stiff glasses of brandy.

> "Above all he scorned the sentiment which seeks to prolong enjoyment by moderation, arguing that a true man should only strive to still the cravings of nature—and that the only real pleasure in life worthy of a man was making love."

These observations led Wagner to the opinion that in Bakunin "the purest impulses of an ideal humanity conflicted strangely with a savagery entirely inimical to all civilisation." This, combined with Bakunin's good-humoured gibes at the Jesus-obsession from which Wagner was suffering, led the *maestro* to the conclusion that Bakunin was a mere visionary, whose reputation for dangerousness was overdrawn.

Luckily for Wagner's theory, Bakunin went off on a fool's errand to Prague about this time. Having heard of a revolution

there, he obtained a fake passport, shaved his luxuriant hair and beard, and set off secretly.

> "We bade farewell to Bakunin with the firm conviction that we should never again see him alive. But in a week he was back once more, as he had realised immediately what a distorted account he had received as to the state of things in Prague, where all he found ready for him was a mere handful of childish students."

This incident rehabilitated Wagner's self-respect. It was Bakunin who came in for chaff now when he spoke of the world revolution. But in a few days street fighting had broken out in Dresden; and Bakunin was in charge of operations with Wagner as a lieutenent. Once again it was Bakunin's turn to mock at the Germans for their amateurishness in really serious matters such as revolution.

V

On the ninth of May the Dresden rising was suppressed and the revolutionaries, including Wagner, fled. Bakunin was captured at Chemnitz, and his immolation of long years began. He was imprisoned in Dresden and in Konigsten fortress, tried, sentenced to death—and then handed over to the Austrian Government, who presumably wanted to get information from him about the Slav conspiracies. Sent in chains to Prague, he was again tried, sentenced to death, and then, after a year—as an even worse punishment—handed over to the Russian Government.

In 1851 he was imprisoned in the terrible dungeons of "Peter-Paul," chained to the wall, for five years. Then he was transferred to the Schlusselburg dungeons, below water level of the Neva, where his teeth rotted out and his skin went yellow. This was not the end of Bakunin.

VI

The new Czar, Alexander II, came to the throne in 1856. There was a general amnesty of political prisoners. But when Bakunin's mother petitioned for her son's release the Czar very amiably replied: "Madame, not so long as he draws breath." This same Czar was sent to blazes later by an Anarchist bomb.

The next year, having spent eight years in the dungeons, Bakunin was deported to Siberia as a penal colonist, and could at least stretch his limbs again.

After four years his chance came. This unconquerable man escaped from Siberia! He reached Japan, crossed the Pacific Ocean to 'Frisco, traversed America to New York; and, circling the earth with a flame, landed at Liverpool in December, 1861.

The next day he was in London, like a ghost of '48—unrepentant, full of fight and energy—a roaring ghost, with the strength of a lion rampant.

VII

Such was Bakunin. From that time till his death in 1876

he tried to make up for the twelve prime years of his life lost in gaol. His activities in organising revolution were illimitable. In London he met the companion of his youth, Alexander Herzen, again; he at once joined the Russian and Polish groups and edited their paper, *Kolokol* (*The Tocsin*). Within a year he had visited the comrades in Paris, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Brussels, Switzerland, and Italy, establishing the Anarchist societies everywhere on a secret basis.

In spring, 1864, he was in Florence on "Headquarters" work. The same year he was back in Sweden in the summer; and in the autumn he was in London (where he met Marx again), in Paris (where he met Prudhon again), and he was back in Florence for Christmas.

Nothing could restrain him, and he seemed to be everywhere. The Anarchist secret societies sprang up all over Italy, like spoor of the lion as he roamed. Within a few months he was at Florence, at Sorrento, at Naples—and then (1867) he attended the Peace Congress at Geneva, and was elected member of the Central Committee of the Peace and Freedom League at Berne; Victor Hugo being the President. Before this gathering of sentimental idealists (very much like supporters of our present League of Nations) Bakunin spoke as follows:

> "Your civilisation is founded from time immemorial upon the forced labour of the enormous majority, condemned to lead the lives of brutes and slaves, in order that a small minority might be enabled to live like human beings. This monstrous inequality rests upon the complete separation between headwork and manual labour. But it is an abomination which will be destroyed; for in future the working classes are resolved to make their own politics . . ."

Naturally he had to resign from the League; and when the Working Men's International assembled at Geneva, Bakunin was there, quarrelsome and defiant and impatient and truculent. At the time of the Paris Commune he was in Italy leading the movement against Mazzini—his absence from Paris must have grieved him—but he continued indefatigably organising on Committees, at Congresses, by speeches and by thousands of personal letters stoking the fires of revolt in every country in Europe.

On his deathbed in 1876 he said: "I have lived violently, now I die at peace." His last words were: *Diavolo! Diavolo!*

VIII

Such was Bakunin, the greatest intransigeant, and his name cannot die. He has left no corpus of doctrine like Marx, who has prevailed; but he defined in his own person the deathless principle of all valid action—*destruam et ædifico*. This principle goes much deeper into life even than political revolution; and it may be that the Russians alone understand it nowadays—certainly they owe much of their success to the Bakunin tradition.

He combined in his own person brute vigour with intellectual subtlety; intellectual subtlety with a ruthless courage; and

ruthless courage with the most tenderly sympathetic humanity. He fought a losing fight, and a lonely fight. Apart from police persecution, with its twelve years' physical victory over him, he had to contend against, and failed to overcome, the powerfully logical consistency of Marx, as well as the vacant cautiousness of the revolutionary material (" radical," " liberal," " democratic") of his time. Yet more will be heard of that man. Capitalism has developed to the holocaust of the " Great " war, and the dispersal of all decent values in its aftermath. Machinery and its accompanying sacrifice to profit-scrambling, has developed the Robot and crushed the man. We shall need the Bakunin-principle, yet.

IX

Like all men of action, he was romantic, not in the " literary " sense of the term, but in the sense that he dramatised his every action in terms of a pre-conception. Too much romanticism of this sort can nullify a revolutionist; which happened to Trotsky; but only after the revolution, not before. In so far as the character of the revolutionary leaders affects the direction of events, the more romanticism the better before and during the actual struggle for power. Trotsky's impetuousness was invaluable when he organised the Red Army, and when he faced the conquering Junkers at Brest-Litovsk. It was pleasantly dramatic to appear before the German High Command in a slouch and a private soldier's uniform—plenipotentiary of the Soviet Republics—and to say to the heel-clicking sentry " Hello, Comrade ! " before noticing the Brass Hats. That was the Bakunin touch. Stalin couldn't have done that; but Stalin is the revolutionary now, not Trotsky.

Stalin's motto, like that of Mr. Baldwin, is " Safety First." As statesmen both require economic stability. The difference between them is not psychological, and it is not one of personal method. It is merely that Baldwin seeks to stabilise capitalism while Stalin seeks to stabilise the new régime. To such a climax of realism even the most heroically-carried-through revolution must come. Here is no work for heroes, flaming at heads of phalanges. Exit the Bakunin-principle, exit Trotsky. Enter Stalin, up-stage, sits at desk quietly, works . . .

X

It is the true greatness of the greatest revolutionary of them all, Lenin, that he could adapt himself, with overwhelming commonsense, to changes in a changing revolutionary situation. This was " tactics." Although it is barely ten years since Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Malady*, was published, we have already enough historical perspective to know that Lenin was right (as usual) in declaring that the most uncompromising revolutionary is the one who best knows how to compromise. At any rate the Soviet Republics have not only survived but have incalculably strengthened themselves within and without against every opposition; and there they are, proceeding on the principles of Leninism, and are practically certain to remain. In the work just mentioned Lenin flayed all

impatient "Left-Wing" intransigeance with the whip of Expediency, urging that it was necessary to hold and consolidate the ground won in Russia, and to hell with abstract revolutionism. His description of a certain kind of intellectualist rebelliousness is devastating:

> "It is not sufficiently known abroad that Bolshevism grew up, formed, and hardened itself in long years of struggle against *petty-bourgeois revolutionism*, which resembles, or borrows something from Anarchism. . . . The small-holder, who is a constant sufferer under capitalism, moves easily, when faced with ruin, to extreme revolutionism, but is incapable of displaying any consistency, organisation, discipline, or firmness. The petty-bourgeois, 'gone mad' from the horrors of capitalism, is a social phenomenon which, like anarchism, is characteristic of all capitalist countries. The weakness of such revolutionism, its futility, its liability to transform itself into obedience, apathy, fantasy, and even into a 'mad' infatuation with some bourgeois 'craze'—all this is a matter of common knowledge."

Note at once that Lenin distinguishes this "mad" revolutionism from deliberate philosophical anarchism. The theories of the "petty-bourgeois gone mad" have nothing in common with one another except their hydrophobia, much less have they anything in common with the Bakunin-principle, which is rare, while petty-bourgeois "madness" is epidemic. Lenin's criticism applies, for example, to the raving "transition" mob in Paris, who assume, amid a thousand other vagaries, that word-chopping and the use of lower-case for caps, is revolution. It applies also, splendidly home, to Wyndham Lewis, that fantastical "enemy" of everything and nothing, who garbles and espouses in turn abstract Communism, East-versus-West pictorial sociology, Shakespearean heterodoxy, and æsthetic Fascism—with photo of author and all his Press-cuttings.

Lenin's criticism applies also to a "modern" of great literary genius, D. H. Lawrence, who in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* sets out a quasi-revolutionary thesis of attack upon the Gentry by means of sexual-social humiliation—first making the mistake of selecting the wrong opponents, for the unfortunate and dispersed English Gentry hardly matter at all now, having long been displaced from their feudal hegemony by capitalists à la Mond; and secondly, using a purely abstract weapon of attack upon the ruling class, viz. lumbar mysticism; and thirdly, not even relating his chosen characters and conflicts to actuality: making the gamekeeper an almost-gentleman with a foot in both class-camps, so that the Lady was not even properly humiliated "from below," because she knew her lover could talk and behave like a Gentleman whenever he chose. This is precisely the kind of muddled "revolutionism" which Lenin characterises as emanating from the hydrophobia of the lower middle-class; and it wants recognising as such, along with the whole self-consciously "modern" movement in Art and Letters, with its plastic and emotional vorticisms and abstract modes. Even Aldous Huxley, formerly quite a humorist, has gone off the rails in *Point Counter Point*, dragging in sociology and politics à la Wells, and boring

us with dull Fascist theorisings, nothing developed bravely or neatly to the point of action.

XI

All this fake revolutionism and rebelliousness, whether inside or outside the Communist Party, Lenin has properly knocked on the head. A revolutionary theory which is not going to lead to street-fighting, sooner or later, is the most ridiculous fake—tepid air, not even hot. Now the Bakunin-principle, *destruam et ædifico,* wherever and whenever it has operated, has never shirked this elementary necessity. English history provides enough examples of the necessity of force to initiate reform. From Jack Cade to Cromwell and the Chartist riots; even to the declaration of that pleasant old Victorian radical, John Burns, who became a Liberal Cabinet Minister ("It may yet be necessary to despatch capitalists to heaven by chemical parcels post")—the Bakunin-principle has had its constant airing. One of the best recent examples of course was that of Jim Connolly, who marched into the Post Office at Dublin in 1916 with a conglomerate army of mystical Gaels, Fenians and proletarian Socialists. Connolly was captured by the British, and, although a wounded prisoner, was propped up against a wall and shot (this was before Edith Cavell); but at any rate Connolly had started something. The Irish have their *Saorstat* now, for what it is worth; and what is more important, there was a repercussion the following year in Russia—Lenin was beside himself with excitement when he heard the news of Connolly's effort, and took it to mean that the world revolution had actually begun at last.

The point here is that no revolution, in fact no human action, can be initiated without the stimulus of the Bakunin-principle. I am not denying that this principle would be a menace in Soviet Russia nowadays—"they've had some," and they are fully entitled to a spell of Leninist compromise. George Lansbury said to Lenin: "Why shouldn't the English Trade Unionists be allowed to compromise, since Bolshevism has compromised?" To which Lenin answered in effect, "We did not compromise with our own ruling class; but now we have to get on with the job of running this country, and we may have to compromise with the imperialist bandits of other countries (including yours) for the time being."

Leninism, as advocated thus by the calm and practical mind of a realist, has in fact assured the triumph of Bolshevism in Russia *after* the revolution; but abstract Leninism (or compromise) in the still-capitalist countries might very well damp the world-revolutionary movement with over-sophistication. A case in point is that the British Communist Party for years put the soft pedal on anti-god propaganda, as "tactics" to avoid estranging the Clydeside Roman Catholics. And this is the *reductio ad absurdum* of tactics, because the war against religion can never be relaxed by a revolutionary party; not even after the revolution and certainly not before. The exposure of religion is almost the essence of the ideological attack upon capitalism; just as its propagation, by the journalism of deans, community

hymn-wailing at football matches, wireless broadcasting of church services, and newspaper stunting of piffling "prayer-book" controversies, is essential in the buttressing of capitalism.

XII

Marx and Lenin, long before Miss Laura Riding, pointed out that "Anarchism is not enough." Of course, Marx and Lenin were speaking of actualities, of a class-fight for power, with men sprawling bloody in streets and against walls. They were discussing ways and means of rebuilding a decent, more human, and more reasonable society from the ruins of the present ramshackle and jerry-built social structure—whereas the literary lady is speaking of precisely nothing at all. I am not urging here that Anarchism *is* enough: merely that Anarchism, as personified in Bakunin, and only in Bakunin, is the essential valid stimulus to effective action. *I destroy and I build*—only Bakunin had the full-blooded passion in these matters. Here is his "Catechism":

> "The revolutionist is a man under a vow. He ought to have no personal interests, no business, no feelings, no property. He ought to be entirely absorbed in one single interest, one single thought, one single passion—the Revolution. He has only one aim—Destruction of the existing order. Between him and the present society there is war to the death, incessant, irreconcilable. He is ready to die, to endure torment, and with his own hands to KILL ALL who place obstacles in the way of that revolution. . . . So much the worse for him if he has any ties of relationship, of friendship, or of love."

There you have the single-track mind, the essential character of every man of action. No compromising here! Know your foe, and destroy him. With just a difference, be it noted, this is the identical frame of mind required of every Tommy Atkins who joins the King's Colours for active service against the King's enemies. It is also the frame of mind of the scientist in his laboratory engaged in cancer research. It is even the "playing-fields" frame of mind of the Rugby winger streaking for the corner flag with a ball under his arm. It is the principle of action, and the only principle of action. In Nietzsche's phrase:

> ". . . a yes, a no, a straight line, a goal . . ."

It is the principle most utterly lacking in the modern world, particularly in Baldwinised England.

XIII

When I say that we shall need Bakunin yet, I mean that we shall need this Bakunin-principle of action: I mean that we shall need to destroy. It is this which the Socialist reformers shrink from. If they were working-men (these "Labour" leaders), they would know instinctively that you must demolish the old building before you put up a new one on the same site. But no. Being intellectuals, they imagine that you can place new beams and rafters, one at a time, in the old house, till at last you have a new house. They call this patching process the

Inevitability of Gradualness, and regard themselves as being practical men—rebuilding a house, without pulling the old one down, without even touching the foundations!

XIV

No well-intentioned person could journey in an underground tube-train full of wan faces coming in to work in the mornings from the suburbs, reading their *Daily Express*, or returning from work in the evenings towards the suburbs, reading their *Evening Standard*, without feeling homicidal. If this massed paleness and vacuity is what civilisation has brought man to, by all means let civilisation be destroyed. It seems to me inevitable that such will be the conclusion, sooner or later, of all kindly persons endowed with the faculty of observation and thinking. There is a hunted and miserable, a caught look, about these pale creatures trapped in the mechanical whirligig. Better destroy them, to put them out of their pain.

The re-building of civilisation we can safely leave to those who survive the catastrophe; for there will be survivors, lots. It is always worth remembering that, even if every capitalist and priest in England were destroyed, together with the Houses of Parliament, all churches, Buckingham Palace, the Nelson Column, and the Albert Memorial; and even if "Lord" Rothermere and "Lord" Beaverbrook were prevented by *force majeure* from issuing their "news" papers; and even if the Monarch abdicated and the Constitution were nullified—nevertheless, even after these apparently cataclysmic events, Britain would remain an island to the North-West of France; coal would still be dug in Welsh valleys, cloth woven in the North, Devonshire Cream clotted in Devon, hops grown in Kent, and ale brewed at Burton. Whatever political permutations occur, life goes on. Not a single politician realises this.

XV

Bakunin realised it. What, then, did he mean by Revolution? It is flogging the obvious to point out that he did not mean the electoral change of party office-grabbers which Democracy achieves at intervals. In fact it is impossible to believe that anybody (with the exception of the 20,000,000 dolts who have just voted) could believe that there is any fundamental difference between Ramsay Macdonald and Baldwin, or that either or both of these politicians could essentially change the face of life in Britain. Much more than a X on a ballot-paper is required for that.

Bakunin saw through the political shuffle:

> "We reject all legislation, all authority, and all privileged, licensed, legal, and official influence, even though deriving from universal suffrage; convinced that it can turn only to the advantage of a dominant minority of exploiters against the interest of the immense majority in subjection to them. . . . The best governments are invariably the worst."

But neither did Bakunin desire the substitution of a Communist State for a Capitalist State:

> "Communism I abhor, because it is the negation of liberty, and without liberty I cannot imagine anything truly human. I abhor it because it concentrates all the strength of society in the State, and squanders that strength in its service."

His object was the complete abolition of the State itself:

> "The State means power, oppression, exploitation, and injustice established as the prevailing system. The State never had a morality, and can never have one. Its only morality and justice is its own advantage, its own existence, and its own omnipotence at any price. Before these interests, all the interests of mankind must disappear. The State is the negation of manhood.
>
> "So long as there is a state, war will never cease. Each state must conquer or be conquered. Each state must found its own power on the weakness of other states. To strive for international justice and freedom, and lasting peace, while there are states, is a ridiculous naiveté."

Bakunin himself was guilty of the "ridiculous naiveté" of believing that this simple truth would be easily perceived.

XVI

There is no necessity here to argue for or against Anarchy as a political philosophy. Anarchism as immediate working-class politics has long been put on ice, first by Marx in Bakunin's day, and still more recently by Lenin in *The State and Revolution*. The modern anarchists (if any) are a mere handful of die-hard syndicalists with a flavour of Tolstoyan watery "non-resistance" theory which washes them out from the field of action entirely. The revolutionary working-class movement of the twentieth century is and will be Communist. Yet the last has not been heard of Bakunin.

The Hegelian nihilism, which he and Herzen worked out in their earliest student days, found this formulation:

> "Socialism will be developed in all its phases, even to its uttermost consequences, the absurd. Then, once again, there will come forth the cry of negation from the titanic breast of the revolutionary minority. Once again the mortal struggle will begin. But in that struggle Socialism will be in the position of the present Conservatism, to be conquered eventually by a revolution unknown to us. The eternal game of living, cruel as death, inevitable as birth, constitutes the flux and re-flux of history, the *perpetuum mobile* of more life."

This is the soundest possible revolutionary theory. Communism, on its most fundamental hypothesis, cannot stand still but must develop. Develop to what? To practical Anarchism, no less; and it is then that Bakunin will have the last laugh. When the whole world is a federation of working-class states, it is the destruction of State-power which will become practical revolutionary politics. This is the future of Bakunin, though he has only a partial present. That present is the element of determined character which alone can make a revolutionist effective: the uncompromising pugnacity in rebelliousness which marks Satan for our respect.

FOUR LOVE POEMS

by PHILIP LINDSAY

I've seen you twice now and I'm still afraid,
And after when I've missed you, when you're past,
I always think of all I should have said.
I really mean to; but you do walk fast.

Next time I see you (that is if I do)
I'll stop you in the street and doff my hat.
I will, I say I will, I'll stop and speak to you,
And—and we'll have some tea together after that.

With you I shall seem different than I am:
Congreve will spray his wit through me,
And I, the timid one, God's simple lamb,
Will turn to Casanova. You will see.

I'll talk only of things you understand.
"A nice dress you are wearing" I shall say.
And then I think that I will squeeze your hand,
Speak suave but masterful, and you must obey.

You must obey me then, Juan at last!
My god, again, you here right by my side.
Good-morning. Damn it, why do you walk so fast?
"Keep to the left," the callous policeman cried.

You say that you love me—
  Well, prove it then.
Give in, let me become
  God among men.

But damn it, you're hopeless.
  All you can do
Is move away as I come
  Closer to you.

You were by the piano when I kissed you—
One hand of yours fell loosely on the keyboard
And some notes trickled forth and then I knew
That you had surrendered; that treble chord
Was the last dying note of all your fear.
Caught high up in light one moment it stayed,
Then slipped into your sigh as I drew you near,
No longer afraid.

Repetitions of old questions and answers, old kisses:
That is our love. "God, I adore you!" This is
My everlasting problem. Always you reply
"Please don't be silly." And perhaps you add
That Mollie's bought new shoes. It's enough to drive a man mad.
"God, I adore you!" "O don't be silly" you sigh.

NOTE ON THE FORM OF THE NOVEL

by BRIAN PENTON

DESPITE all the gibblegabble about it is there really any problem of the novel?

First, what do I mean by reality, what can anyone mean now that Einstein and Freud have given a new direction to all analyses of mind. Can I define it as something external to all my neuroses, an immutable quantity demanding from you, from me, from the Bishop of Birmingham descriptions that would differ only in the literary quality of our styles? Certainly not. How then can I conceive as anything more than an abstraction a realistic novel which presumes to convey with detached dispassionate attitude images of a world outside my nerve mesh and on the basis of that conception distinguish between Joyce and Firbank?

I know that for some the rhythms of tragic emotion tauten life to a pattern of anger and fear and perilous lusthungers and that they see Cleopatra staring insatiably at her image in their eyes and hear the repercussions of Helen's first kiss behind the sucking tongue of any kind sweet drab. But for that same drab, a simple wench, reality will be only a hazy weave of bilious tastes, sunshine, the warmth of bed, silkknickers, and all things connected with men who have fair moustaches. That is not the world for which Birmingham beautifully extemporises prayer nor is it mine nor is mine Birmingham's nor yours. Who sees with me the transcendent nobilities of booze and young girls and finds the earth a brothelparadise of ecstatic madness? You poet and you kind old lady and you simple-minded anarchist and you you vulgar little red-mouthed bitch each husk yourself in your little exclusive image of life, incommunicably far from me. And none knows life as Apollo sees it glancing down upon a tangle of bald heads, bowler hats, and bottoms.

The point is simple. Each of us gazes into a peculiar facet of reality and we know it not as a thing detached from us but as a fluid warmth or bitterness in the blood. The universe is as intimately localised in ourselves as a bladderstone. Isn't it obviously a fake then to pretend that we can remove ourselves into emotionless vacuums of scrutiny and create there a mosaic of life outside?

Dreiser is the man who of all the realists makes me feel that I am talking sense. For those in whom life has flattened the will, leaving no power to project at its lunacies the gay contempt of laughter that is our abiding resource against all of earth's malice, Dreiser naturally seems a most scrupulous realist because he extracts from his material an insidious poisonous despair. Life is real, life is earnest! Inevitably the crumpled ego will believe that and feel misery, depression and despair in literature as overtones of authentic reality, perceiving in our delight the hysteria of the pitiably irre-

sponsible, village idiots knowing not what they do. From this approach we must accept the second book of Pantagruel as a gay but irrelevant thing beside Dreiser the serious novelist.

The question is: does he press into my blood sensations of this world from which he has deliberately detached himself? Does he give me the full flavour of the sweat and the tumult? No. It is there I know, but I look down into the turmoil through swathes of glass that insulate all feeling. I know every detail of Carrie's life appearance habits and surroundings. A complete catalogue. But I do not *feel* her. She remains abstracted from me. She exists I am sure, she moves, breathes, kisses, sleeps, but no warmth of her warmth melts my body and outside the tentacles of my nerves she is as unrealised as the women for whose eyes I fumble on the street.

I step into the Satyricon sucked from my own subtly exclusive plane of reality into Petronius' crush of rounded, warm, bloodstuffed men and women. I run in the dirty streets of that Rome trembling at the name of Quartilla who always kisses with a baggy mouth licking my chin. Through the smell of Trimalchio's good food and good wine girls stink urgently in my desiring nostrils. Though, unlike Dreiser, he has meticulously elaborated few details of this world, I know every detail, for Petronius' gusto and contempt have burned them on my blood. What he felt I feel as far as my nerves are strong enough to carry such a fury of happiness.

But if you think that after all this is scarcely a criterion since the Satyricon is just the sort of life I am always lusting for I will give myself up to the Dixhuitième arcadia of Daphnis and Chloë where Longus defines as vaguely as a fancy on clouds the properties of spotless goats, clean hay and unsuppurating dung. Could there be a remoter world? But it hangs on the ends of my nerves. I live in it weeping for Chloë—and myself—when I remember that girl who used to take me behind the bougainvilla at the back of the garden every afternoon—vainly because I was awkward and foolish and thought girls wore bows at their necks to keep their dresses shut.

Petronius' own feeling for it dissolves the Satyricon into my blood but Dreiser scrupulously feeling nothing shows me Chicago only as a city of implacable strangers further away than America, further away than the moon, immeasurably far away, outside my senses.

Only an emotional statement of life can be real, of life emotionally realised either in anger or delight. The more passionate the statement, lyrically or sardonically—Longus or Petronius—the more real to me what it states.

Of course Dreiser does not exhaust the Realistic Novel. Joyce has found and developed possibilities in it and he has tried to vitalise its abstractions by relating every statement directly to the blood of his characters and giving the dimensions a valid existence in the form of the novel. But for all that I cannot help coupling him with Firbank in some discerning subconscious association of their characteristics. What a monstrous fantasy the Dublin of Bloom and Daedalus is. Having recovered from the weariness of climbing the dunghills

of Joyce's diarrhœtic irrelevance I look back on Bloom's day and see a rushing nightmare of more than Scheherazadian lunacies. It is an opulent dream. Anything might happen there without surprising me. He conquers the intractable dimensions by lifting Dublin to a new point of relativity where all local values cease to exist. There plausibly the Lord Mayor of London might go mad and turn into a pantechnicon making love to the Virgin Queen, and after changing to an iguana and half an elephant swim out to sea singing "Rule Britannia." Such things would be unremarkable in the Dublin of Mr. Bloowoowhowomb.

Joyce tried to be a realist but, such is the inconsequentiality of matter, reality collapsed under his fingers into a million mad distortions beyond the power of Merodack-Jeanneau to conceive. He did, however, create a convincing world; not an abstract of a world but, according to my definition of reality as sensation in the blood, a world I can feel and smell. He creates all the dimensions of a convincing world but, regrettable lack, puts nothing in them. Somebody, I think it was Jolas in Transition, called Bloom falstaffian Bloom, but far from having the remotest affinity with Falstaff Bloom, I'm so lonely Bloom looking at meekmorning Bloom kidneychewing by miriamcuckolded Bloom by Henry Flower Bloom, isn't a character at all. He's nothing. Joyce made a mistake in believing that there was a difference, a distinctive difference, between the mass of sensations that flow through the semiconscious of a bus conductor and those that are the only content of a bishop's mind. To create character, or rather to convey character, he would have to do more than merely set these down in their diffuse incoherence. Selected they might faintly unentertainingly etch the outlines of an individuality, but Joyce scorns artificial selection. Character is vividly developed, however, only by showing the individual's peculiar conscious or semiconscious effort to justify or ennoble or escape or realise in selfconsciousness the processes in the back of the mind.

Joyce has made one definite contribution: he has conclusively reduced all the pretensions of the realistic novel to absurdity. If he had written a parody on it he couldn't have done better than Ulysses. He has finally destroyed too any surviving hope in the Zola-Dreiser-Moore-Hardy-Flaubert convention, for at least he was a serious artist trying to make a serious artform of the novel and to say what he had to say with devices not too shockingly artificial. He deserves nearly all the respect we can spare. Instead of borrowing the old matrices Flaubert had left for moulding the fluid material of life into a neat ingot, rounded, smoothed, stamped, and weighed to neat proportions he did try to define a form in which he could show life sprawling in every direction, ceaselessly interlocking, entangling, changing its centre, its balance, scattering, coming together again—eternally blindly yet interactively restless. He did not drive a channel into this turbulence and in tidy but artificial isolation examine life damned momentarily for observation around a central theme and character. He understood the relativity of minds caught in the reverberating consequences

of action but impotently divorced on oblique axes of personal equation, and when I revive from the boredom of following Bloom's mind through the minute trivialities of his unexceptional movement I do feel that life has been roaring in my ears. But it is all so vague while I read and doughy.

What I protest against is the consuming dullness of the book, a result immediately of its interminable vomit of irrelevant sensation associations and further back, fundamentally, of Joyce's failure to centralise his material. I applauded him a moment ago for having avoided the convention of centralisation; now I reprove him for the worse fault of having not enough will to bind the material in a dynamic unity without the aid of the convention he discarded. He is helpless. He loses control of the material which washes everywhere about his impotent hands that promised to canute control the sea and rescue the landscape from the abomination of dykes. The cliffs of his formidable pretensions crumble till at last no form remains, only a froth of waters bewildering to look upon. Joyce is the weak man who tried to do a big job. In his heroic debris he deserves applause.

A simpler, more easily definable, break of will destroyed form in Conrad after he had mastered it completely in *Nigger of the Narcissus*, *Typhoon*, and *Youth*. I cannot imagine a more exasperating bit of patchwork than *The Arrow of Gold*. That prologue and the lovemaking in a footnote. It is maddening. Such execrable craftsmanship cannot be reckoned slovenliness in Conrad for no one ever bled words more painfully. The construction of *The Arrow of Gold* collapses because a base ambition to become a great and noble literary man and a gentleman after the manner of Lord Palmerston's time had deflated his will. He funked making Donna Rita give herself to George at the psychologically correct moment—after Ortega has been battering upon the door. He funked control of his own silly ambitions. Would a gentleman after the manner of Lord Palmerston's time, would an honourable and respected literary man, friend of Mr. Maddox Hueffer, do such a thing? No. Obviously he had constructed the work to attain its pyramidal apex at that moment of conflicting greeds, fears, and desire. But gentlemanly, honourably he abstained, selfidentified with George, and put it in a footnote. Of course the work collapses round this point, this point of Conrad's funkdisintegrated will, priderotted will, will of an English gentleman.

The same terror in a more violent and sickening form disembowelled Dickens, who might have blasted the slowly hardening crust of bourgeoise values in England with guffaws of rabelaisian contempt and the more intricate contempt of passion. Here is one to make you vilely enraged with all the decencies of a Good Man's conscience. What cowardly evasions, sneaking selfdeceits, grovelling degraded morality. And out of it all what an irrevocable collapse. Dickens, who might have built greater than petronian edifices of delight, feared the nemesis of social disdain that waits upon all who want to cry Joy, Joy in words and therefore in action too and always crawled back to snotty snivelling debaucheries of pain

ashamed of the lusts that threatened to tear him out of the rotting earth he inhabited. It is almost incredible that a man who could perceive the agonies of Rosa Dartle, sense the delicate nervenet under the soft flesh of Lady Deadlock, stare past the mirroring eyes of Edith Dombey, feel the thwarted angers of Bradley Headstone, pick Mr. Venus out of a world of dun, blank, murderous dullness, discover Mr. Boffin and Silas Wegg and Tony Weller and Quilp, shudder in the presence of Denis, and appreciate the refined disdain of Wrayburn—it is incredible, horrifying, that such a man could bog himself in the defæcations of sentimental pity for lunatic asylums, poorhouses, cripples, and small boys beautifully dying.

Dickens could.

Dombey and Son, Bleak House, The Old Curiosity Shop, Great Expectations, Our Mutual Friend all define that collapse of form at the point where will baulked the job of going forward with a lyric of earth or a tragic repudiation of the values imposed upon it by people like the man who loved *David Copperfield.* The momentary contempt he felt for those values when he created Lady Deadlock, when he saw the world as a drunken world around Mr. Pickwick evaporated in a sudden sweat of fear and he hastened back whining to dirty dreams of death—the only one since Shakespeare who could have grasped falstaffs and cleopatras out of the great wash of life.

How he whipped himself to virtue, lugubriously ecstatic in the masochistic anguish of pity. When he was creating Little Nell, weeping on to the pages before him, he wrote to a friend saying that he feared to go out lest he should become cheerful.

He paid for it anyway in leaving behind not a single thing that is organically unified—form developing unobtrusively out of the material it binds. Even *Our Mutual Friend,* his most spacious effort, the first attempt since Shakespeare to forge a complete image of life with intricate subterranean labyrinths of dark emotion and loud bellowings of delight, collapses monstrously in a jumble of the most filthy sentimentalities ever suppurated in a decent citizen's mind. Here he comprehended the whole scramble of existence, from Bella Wilfer to Lucy Hexham, from Wrayburn to Headstone, from Mr. Boffin and Mr. Venus to Mrs. Wilfer. Colossal. Since Shakespeare it was one of the few enterprises that built on a grand scale crescendoes of laughter and passion in form wide enough to carry the interwoven relativities of action—those crisscrossing ripples, stirred along the surface of life by inconsequential gesture, that wash us at last onto dim contrary shores of anguish or happiness. But again and again the Atlas of his will crumbles to a paltry earth conscience, wormeaten by pity, a healthless thing: Dickens the malefic metamorphosed suddenly to Dickens the Good Man who loved the stench of pain and suffering ugliness.

I dwell upon Dickens because I feel that he defines the point of disintegration in the novel. He who might have synthesised all the elements into a form capacious and flexible enough to hold the most violent emotional conflicts, the most delicate lyricism, the most dynamic orgies of laughter and given it an

æsthetic validity it did not possess beside such an absolute as the Shakespearean drama, for example, blasted what little unity it had into the wretched muddle we find about us now. Before Dickens the novel had pretensions. Fielding had carried the petronian tradition to a more complicatedly gay analysis of man's only greatness, the godlike pursuits of lechery and booze. Scott revolved about an understanding of savage brutality and wrote well as soon as the murdering began. Emily Bronte found that same cruelty ingrown to tortuous darknesses of repression and produced a work that has in English no equal for its restrained but pitiless expression of passion futilely tangled to a knot of pain. Jane Austen wrote banalities to which time and a generation of dessicated æsthetes have given a subtlety she did not possess, and George Elliott preceded Hardy with thorough but unmitigably dull pictures of English life and landscape. Thackeray, obliquely amusing, exposed himself with a partiality for such unbeddable little vixens as Becky Sharp and for the debilitated Newcombes. But paltry and pallid as some of these were they did make an effort to consolidate a form significant æsthetically. Even Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte and Mrs. Gaskell and Miss Edgeworth asked the novel to bear less than the ignominy Dickens was to impose upon it when alarmed by the company of the Dickens who made friends of Quilp and Denis and Rosa Dartle he drew across that doubtful person's face the mask of worthy Mr. Podsnap and began to worry about the spanked bottoms of schoolboys and the uses to which orphans could be put.

From this moment the blood of Scott and the belching heroisms of Fielding found no room in the novel which had fallen into the evil company of sociologists. Dickens it was—Dickens the flatulent figment of the very worst abominations of Victorian conscience—who led us to a generation of caterwauling social critics. In another time they would have spilled into tracts and works unambiguously labelled their evangelical dissatisfaction with a world that still, thank god, has in it things to revolt the souls of Lord Mayors, but after Dickens one needs, to write a novel, not even a limited circulation of blood nor a knowledge how human beings love and drink and fight, but only a vision about improved sanitation and the awful things that go on in public lavatories. Via Dickens' social conscience the novel arrived into a moribund civilisation that took these and problems of comparable magnitude seriously, as a highly developed implement of propaganda. What a splendid megaphone for the whines of Bennett and Wells and Shaw and all others tormented by a world not yet quite sterilised to precision, sobriety, and a geometrical pattern of rational living. The serious rightthinking of Sinclair Lewis, pained to protest by the discovery that Babbitt and Gantry squirm obscenely within his horizons rather than inspired by the spectacle of so much entrancing lunacy to praise of the prodigal god who conceived them, has now a dangerous weapon for deodorising the earth of the only things that make it habitable—its madmen.

Everywhere such people with good intentions dream of a better life. There never was so frenzied a lust for Utopias.

Man is losing his grip on the earth because something has broken the connection between the lusthungers that are his claws gripped in the soil and the consciousness slowly, intricately developed in him by long civilisation. (I shall say a word about this later when I come to talk of the novel of the future.) The immediate result is a complete dissatisfaction with the earth that gives him only stress, agonising disintegration, torment, and no satisfaction. As a natural corollary he yearns after a world where all conflict will be resolved in peaceful rational order. Here we clamour for communism; there for facism; here for sentimental Rousseau hamlets of simple souls; there for the divine right of kings. But the impulse is universal—a movement out of earth into promising areas of pure light. Everybody believes that it is better to be sane and industrious than drunk and disorderly.

Now I do not say that Dickens is responsible for all this. I say merely that he has reinforced the good conscience of social reformers and turned the novel into an instrument of propaganda for them. If the world is dehumanised of its bedlamic tumult —and only a kind cataclysm killing off all but a few poets and young very vulgar little girls spending that weekend on a high unshakeable mountain can save it—the corroder of idiosyncratic values will be not the wheels of Henry Ford, the Press, or the Cinema, but fundamentally the novel, for it is the influence *behind* all these things, the voice of the world's dreamers exciting the world to improve itself.

But the point for this discussion is that if Dickens had faced his job courageously—and that meant facing himself and his own life—I believe he could have constructed the novel into a form of such æsthetic significance and dimensions that it would have remained beyond the reach of fiddling Utopians like Wells and Shaw. Failing, he left it in fragments easily accessible to anybody with a capacity for pulling the strings of a convention and gave to a generation of debilitated intellectuals a readymade creation. The best of his derivatives is perhaps the Compton Mackenzie of *Poor Relations* absorbed purely with character manifested in gentle, genteel humour, the worst that undifferentiable bunch of earthweary social scavengers, serious problem solvers, from Wells to Huxley. Between them they have brought the novel to the last extreme of neat infallible and never unanticipated formulæ. Huxley is its lowest denominator. He is the type of intellectual whose attacks upon all the things worth living for are most insidious because he conceals himself—perhaps from himself—behind a respect for them. The disguise is thin. Everything exposes him as one thwarted of the warmth of his own blood and devoted therefore to a dog-in-the-manger defence of that bourgeoise paradise where the generative principle will be consummated in a testtube.

But it is necessary to watch Huxley and his compeers of bowelless intellect projecting their profoundly banal hypotheses of a better world into the vacuums of the novel so that one may come upon Lawrence with the full pleasure of grateful surprise. Of Lawrence it is at least possible to affirm from what he writes that he exists, has blood, stomach, hair on his face, and all other

appurtenances of manhood, which is more than one would care to say of most of these tootling pedagogues, his colleagues, who give no impression that they ever performed a human function in their lives. It is impossible to doubt either that he exists in a more than normal exasperation with society, resentful with the resentment of wounded pride and very proud of it too, very selfsatisfied to have been snubbed by the squire's sons in his sensitive childhood and to have carried on his selfesteem the large red scar of hate for all squires' sons and daughters. The snobbish desire for social elevation of the schoolmaster's little boy snubbed by the foolish sons of the squire all through his struggling life has been crosschannelled to a selfsolacing contempt for social elevation, and the vindictiveness of a subtle mind works out its long brooded satisfaction by dominating the intimate tender lives of the squire's sons and daughters in the vivid reality of an imagined world. Thus it redeems the pain of childhood's whipped shame, with Birkin's intellectual pitiless goads, with Aaron. The softest and most easily poisoned core of the social being has been festering for nearly forty years till it has become a refined pain sublimated to a dynamic frenzy that fecundates his mind and gathers every energy of every fibre to a concentrated shriek of anger. This is no pusillanimity: it is the only voice in the novel that commands attention to-day.

Lawrence projects a real world. That world and the laughter-shaken island of Nepenthe—antithetical planes of matter—are the only two convincing images of reality in the modern novel. When we have followed his vitality to its springs and found it bubbling from the hatred of squires' sons privileged to go where schoolmasters' sons are forbidden to go let us still be grateful for so much vehemence cleansing in an age of intellectuals thinly shrieking. It is a creative gust, a frenzy that comes out of a world certainly, painfully felt and floods into our minds vivid sensations of that world, strange though it is.

The slowly gathering rush of tormented emotion rising over the barriers of consciousness darkens my mind and sweeps me into a blackness where the pale faces of disintegrating personalities stare madly at me, clutch me for support, fly from my support. Trivial words are heavy with portentous extraconscious connotations to be perceived only in a rare hysteria of intuition.

Lawrence hungering for unconsciousness ends by being the most selfconscious of all moderns. In him introspection is an aching inturned stare. He starts with a world of three dimensions, developed characters, and consciousness and inverts the usual process by washing out the light, washing out the earth, washing out shapes and consciousness into an opaque blur—women crying from the womb of darkness to demon lovers known only as sensation and darkness. But it is not nihility *he* achieves—only an angry selfconsciousness, a maddening selfrealisation of the death within his own corpuscles. It is not to the recouperating darkness of the womb that his analyses bring *him* but to the contemplated darkness of decay.

Out of this fantastic frenzy grows a form as concrete as any ever wrought in the novel. *Women in Love* is one of the best constructed of all works of art. Here is no formula for defining

character, no convention of approach. I exist inside the novel, privy without *viva voce* stage directions and asides to the heavy significance of every gesture. The dimensions exist as elements of the action and time is a quantity inside that action, not an abstraction I am asked to imagine. In other words, it is a unique art form, not, as the novel has become, a play with extended slabs of description, demanding all the indulgences permitted to the stage.

So we return to my thesis that novelform is a projection from the blood of the creator not a convention—not an external form as the ode is a form and the sonnet and the play. As an external convention it produces only the marionette world of Huxley or the showcases of Dreiser, as outweaving of personal dynamism it produces the taut form of *Women in Love*.

The psychological novel is not something Dostoievsky claps over Raskolnikoff but a form incipient in Raskolnikoff's neuroses and Dostoievsky's. Its close fretful subjective analyses become abstract and preposterous only when imposed upon the less dramatic material of *The American Tragedy*. The intense drama of *Typhoon* naturally germinates an introspective method that becomes maddening only when Conrad forces it over the looser material of *Chance* and *Victory*. How stilted and overcadenced and literary his style is there which seemed before, though its rhythm was exactly the same, so flexible and in its very movement so subtly descriptive. It is impossible to consider form as mere framework apart from the idea it embodies, as an almost arbitrarily chosen vehicle of expression. Form must grow out of the idea, organically develop with each development of that idea, like the husk around the expanding meaty kernel, elastic to its idiosyncrasies, close-fitting, unique. *Tristram Shandy, Typhoon, Crime and Punishment*, and *Wuthering Heights* are perfect forms generated out of their material and inseparable from it, their airy towers suspended from the gusto or passion of the creator.

Therefore it seems—to me—that each novel, existing as an element of the creator's own emotional impact upon life perceived at a certain peculiar angle, will exhaust its method, for every new orientation of life around his variable relativity—that is every new tilt he gives to his unique plane of observation, destroying old perspectives and creating new ones—will subtly change his emotional reaction so that he sees in the same material now delight, now drama, now tragedy, and now only the infinitely inconsiderable antics of dazed ants. The variations a creator can achieve are unlimited, of course, but depend upon his will to selfknowledge. Dickens might have seen the whole of life from every point of view if will had not collapsed in him and he had been able to see himself. The failure of men like Lawrence to escape from their first projection—he still rewrites *Women in Love*—is not a failure of imagination or a lack of material but a failure of will in the discipline of self-knowledge. He cannot get behind his hurt pride and control its frenzies, releasing his energy for new definition of self.

Since the novel becomes then in the last analysis blood-warmth and bloodbitterness externalised we arrive inevitably

at the conclusion that the novel does not exist at all—as artform in the same sense that say the poetic drama is artform. Metric and other definable conventions at least affirm the immutable common basis of all dramatic verse expression, however different in quality, from Shakespeare to Yeats.

No such external conventions distinguish the novel. I don't think the most industrious earthworming D.Litt. (Oxon.) could discover a principle of affinity that would relate *Daphnis and Chloe*, *The Idiot*, *Our Mutual Friend*, *South Wind*, *Don Quixote*, *Nigger of the Narcissus*, and *The Case of Mr. Crump*, and if with peculiar obliquity he were to say that all have chapters, I add *Old Goriot* and *Catherine de Medici*, and if he redouble and say that all have a central theme, I add again *The Satyricon*, and if he protest that all revolve upon an ordered revelation of character I ask shall I add *The Memoirs of the Count De Grammont* and call *Ulysses* by some other name than novel. There is no such thing as the novel: there is only Scott, Fielding, Dickens, Balzac, Rabelais, Petronius, Dostoievsky, Conrad, Herzsheimer; and *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *Tom Jones*, the Second Book of Pantagruel, *The Satyricon*, *The Idiot*, *Typhoon* and *Cythera*.

Of all expressions mind has evolved what we call *the novel*—the projection of personal emotional worlds—is the most intimate to the creator and in the pattern of feeling and spirit it evokes the most unique. For that reason it is naturally the most abundantly coined and imitated. This is the only *problem of the novel*—the eternal problem of finding creators, not coiners.

Every conquest of form creates the means of destroying form because it gives to slack and weakly intellectual, uncreative minds a readymade creation. After the triumphs of Fielding, Balzac and Scott, and Dickens' failure, inevitably the novel would be debased by literati and illiterati alike. But the war made the rot more complete by releasing upon mind a muddle of tortuous despairs beyond the power of a tired people to subjugate with delight in earth. Consciousness seeks refuge in categories of pure reason, in abstract form, feeding upon itself Erisichton-like. Not only must we support the existence of Berta Ruck and Michael Arlen and other concessions to the halfwits of all classes, but suddenly we have no one creating a *novel* that will outlast the day.

What we need is a dynamic mind able to synthesise these tortuous despairs—now inescapably an element of the European mind—with the lust for earth that must be the basis of any attempt to create an image of it. Then perhaps we shall get life back to the *novel* and the smell of life and tumult.

No simple form will be sufficient for the analysis he will have to make of life complicated by the release of ancient terrors, by Freud's and Einstein's contributions to his consciousness. He cannot return to the *novel* where Dickens left it and take up the thread again. He must abandon that conception of one dimensional character on which Mr. Boffin and Wrayburn and Molly Seagrim and the Dominie are created. He must search out their masks with a sardonic contempt more sophisticated a thousand times even than Douglas's and find with more subtle

appreciation than Conrad's the springs of their passion dammed in the clogged labyrinths of a two thousand years' old fear.

The new *Satyricon* cannot be the old *Satyricon* rewritten in a modern setting: it must be a more complex tangle of ecstasy projected through the lava crusts of this ancient pain. The form, when it crystallises out of the consciousness of a more sophisticated but not therefore less earthy Petronius, will be a pattern as crosswoven as the daily more tangled involutions of life itself, an inextricable crisscross of personalities crossmuddled and joy shaking itself free for a more intricate cry of delight.

Let us pray for the man who will perform this colossal integration. The lack of him is the *novel's* only problem.

FOUR FABLES OF LA FONTAINE

I. THE ELEPHANT AND JUPITER'S MONKEY

(xii. 21)

The Elephant and the Rhinoceros
Each claimed precedence, and assumed the Boss.
To settle the dispute, they chose a day
To meet in single combat. All was planned,
When lo, a scout rushed in to say
That Jacko, Ape of Jupiter,
Was to be seen, caduceus in hand,
Descending earthward through the air.
The Elephant made sure that this
Was an Ambassador sent down
To treat with his High Mightiness.
Pleased with such evidence of his renown,
He waited . . . Nothing happened. What was wrong?
Why should credentials take so long? . . .
At last Lord Jacko sauntered in,
And now of course the parley would begin—
The Pachyderm was primed with his reply . . .
But ne'er a word! In Heav'n his feud had not
Aroused as yet the interest he thought—
(The odds 'twixt elephant and fly
Bulk small to Them who rule the Sky)—
And he was forced to make the opening move.
"'Tis no mean fight," said he, "my Cousin Jove
Will shortly witness from His Throne on high:
A brave display His Court will see!"
"What fight?" inquired the Ape with puckered brow.
"Why," said the Elephant, "you surely know
That the Rhinoceros has dared
Demand precedence over Me,

And war has consequently been declared
'Twixt Elephantis and Rhinocere" . . .
Then, as the Ape looked blank, "You must have heard
Of these two famous Capitals?"
"No," he replied: "I am glad to learn their names;
But I must own that in our vasty halls
Such topics are not much discussed."
The Elephant, crestfallen and nonplussed,
Asked with what purpose, then, he had left the skies.
"Oh," said the Monkey, "to adjudge the claims
Of certain Emmets to a blade of grass—
We see to everything! Your case, alas,
Has not yet reached the Heavenly Assize,
Where great and small are equal in God's eyes."

II. THE APE AND THE DOLPHIN
(iv. 7)

The gay old Greeks, perhaps you know,
When sailing th' Archipelago,
Would take on board performing dogs,
And monkeys dressed in fancy togs.
A ship with these attractions found
Not far from Athens ran aground:
But for the Dolphins, all had drowned.
(These creatures hold the human race
In high esteem—so Pliny says,
And Pliny's evidence is good).
They rescued all the men they could,
And one, bamboozled by his shape,
Had very nearly saved an Ape!
The Dolphin, thinking him a Greek,
Gave him a ride upon his neck,
And there he straddled so sedately,
Arion can't have looked more stately;
Till, just as they were nearing land,
His bearer questioned him offhand:
"Is Athens, pray, your native town?"
"Yes," said the Monkey with an air,
"Few citizens are better known.
If you have any business there,
Make use of me; for my relations
Hold all the most important stations:
In fact, my cousin is Lord Mayor."
The Dolphin said "Most kind of you!
And do you know Piræus too?"
"Know him?" he cried, "of course I do—
My greatest friend—good old Piræus!
He regularly comes to see us."
Just fancy! my Orang-outan
Mistook a harbour for a man!

(I know of many nearer home
Who muddle Paddington with Rome,

And cheerfully lay down the law
On places which they never saw.)

The Dolphin, laughing, turned his head.
"Good gracious, 'tis an Ape!" he said,
Unshipt th' impostor in the wave,
And sought a human stray to save.

III. THE ORACLE AND THE IMPIOUS MAN
(iv. 19)

In vain does Earth contrive to cheat the Sky.
No secret winding of Man's mazy heart
But there the Gods Their searching lanthorn dart.
Though on the covering darkness he may cry,
Naked he stands before th' All-seeing Eye.

A Pagan once, of dubious orthodoxy,
Who held his faith with mental reservations,
Devised a scheme astute and foxy
To test the Delphic revelations.
Arrived before the shrine, he said:
"Is what I hold alive or dead?"
(It was a sparrow, you must know,
And he was purposed all along
Either to squash or let it go,
Whichever put Apollo wrong.)
The God saw through the sly design.
"None of your traps!" replied the Voice Divine.
"Dead or alive, produce your sparrow;
And if you follow my advice,
You won't attempt to bluff me twice.
Far sees my eye, far speeds my arrow"

IV. THE JAY IN PEACOCK'S FEATHERS
(iv. 9)

A Peacock moulted; and a Jay,
Rigged in the feathers he had cast away,
Among the other Peacocks, went to strut,
Thinking himself a monstrous nut.
The moment he was recognised,
He found himself bejaped and flouted,
Hissed, hustled, chivied and chastised:
The lordly Peacocks plucked him to the skin.
The chastened fop sought refuge with his kin,
But by them too was scouted.

Grub Street is full of human jays and pies
Who deck themselves in pickings and in stealings,
And bear the name of Plagiaries.
I say no more: I wouldn't hurt their feelings,
And take no int'rest in their dealings.

Edward Marsh

DUNG OF PEGASUS

by PETER MEADOWS—PART VI

A NIGHT OUT: IN LOVE: CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

"GOOD-BYE, then," said Jean. "Come again and see me soon, won't you? I'm sorry to hurry you off, but I really must get dressed for dinner."

"Of course. Only too glad. Thank you so much. Yes. Well, good-bye," I replied.

"Don't forget."

She shut the door, smiling. To do so, she had to let go the dressing-gown she had been holding at the neck—of course, she was still in a kimono at afternoon-tea time, wondering how ever she would get dressed—and though I saw only the merest indication of its falling apart before the door closed, I was left with the troubling conviction that she was standing naked, smiling, on the other side of the thin barrier of wood and frosted glass, as though a dark veil of matter had slid between me and some almost realised luminosity of desire. Smiling. I stood for a moment irresolutely, with nervous hands, wishing I had the courage to fabricate some excuse for returning, or, returned, to sustain the Jovian rôle. Why hadn't I left my hat or a book behind? I was sure now that if I were alone with her for five seconds I would kiss her without any uncertainty; at once, easily. The shifty desire in my eyes would become a masterful tenderness, and I would know what to say. Kisses. On the throat. Then everywhere. But the kisses floated like smoke out of me as the lift dropped, the upward draught blew them out of my head.

In the street, I turned into the nearest hotel and drank a whisky, taking out a handkerchief to hide the wry face. I stared at the bulbous nose of my reflection in the glass with a depressed pleasure. I had another whisky. Morosely, boredly, scowling with a frightened frigidity, I watched the stranger, myself, drink it. And this was I, this was the face that hid a babble of tumultuous delights, a lust for an endless harlequinade, for the wit of laughter and a garden silky with lovers and lutes like twanged moons. This was the person who wanted kisses naked in the streets and troughs of wine and a huge happiness poured through sunlight. I decided to talk to the barmaid.

She had wandered to the other end. "... leaves five prints," I overheard.

"How's business?" I inquired as she passed, a wafted warmth of bosomy scents.

"One and tenpence," she informed the cash register; and over her shoulder, "Hello, duckey." But before I could reply she had moved off to another customer.

"To tell a sheik ..." I caught as she stooped, fumbling for something under the counter with one hand while the other reassured her bodice.

"How are things?" I asked despairingly as she emerged from the thicket of laughter her jest had evoked; but she had seen a friend down to the left, a small pale man with large moustaches worn with an air of ashamed pride. He leant

solicitously across the table, taking her hand in his. "When he's on all fours," she was saying. The small man smiled reproachfully, but said nothing. I went out.

There was a boisterous note in the trams rocking down William Street. I bought an evening paper absent-mindedly from a boy who thrust it into my hand, and when no one was looking got rid of it in a receptacle for tram tickets.

Greek Club as usual, I thought, as I took my seat in the car. An orange sunset hung cloaks of fire on the gaunt anatomy of a half-finished concrete building at the end of the street; rich furs melted on a creaking silhouette of black, like beauty satirical of mortality's need of bones. The stark flat mesh of stone rattled like a skeleton drawing the skies about its throat. Castanets snapped in the clatter of traffic for this dance of black steel and whirled heavens.

It stopped as I got out. Three stories up; all the same people there. I sat at a table as far away from my friends as possible, and meditated through a dish of sodden fish on my cowardly behaviour of the afternoon. Why wasn't I a strong silent man who could take his virility in his hands with a simple pride and push through all resistance with a strenuous stupidity? Once you started talking furiously, you couldn't stop without causing an uncomfortable silence. What must she think of me? But why do women insist on holding a mask over their minds until the last moment, cardboard Sphynxes from some Birmingham of eternity; even the best of them. None will allow herself to be seduced in the porch of her soul's house, whether it's a suburban villa or a palace. They have to be pursued through door after door of spiritual innuendo, up stair after stair, till they submit at last in the attic or the coal-cellar. One of those cinema farces where people chase each other over houses, unaccountably turning up at the most unlikely doors, diving down chutes, and abruptly disappearing down liftwells. That was what a love affair was like. And even when you got her in the last corner of her jerrybuilt mystery, the villain in the indestructable top-hat would probably fall through the ceiling and defeat you.

Well, why shouldn't she ask a little hocuspocus? The trouble was that I worked out too many plans of attack beforehand, and found that when I came to the point my fancy had appropriated the stimulus to action. Daydreams were the devil. I must get up earlier. As soon as I woke. Jump out of bed. Cool shower. Touch toes. Result, a brisk fellow washed cool for action, not a creature of slouching dreams; without a silence stuck in my throat like a lump of bread when I wanted to say the words, ingeniously casual, which would give me the excuse to—but there I was off once more.

I glanced along at the table in front of me, and saw George's foot pressing against Sylvia's. It amused me. There was nothing between me and Sylvia now; or it was a long time since there had been nothing—that put the matter more explicitly. An irritating girl, a mincing, fluttering girl, but a big-hipped, *very* small-breasted girl; never did any girl have a more elusive stupidity.

It amused me to see George's foot involved in a communion of leather while he chatted above the table in his best ironical style. The intonation, though not the words, carried to me; and the hands were deprecatingly humorous.

Decidedly I was amused. I smiled to myself with that slightly conscious adjustment of the features to a gesture, that a vague intoxication induces. I gave an inward chuckle of deliberate superiority. So may a god smile, who secure in some amaranthine integrity of bliss looks down with divine cynicism on the babyish technique of earth's amorists. Decidedly I was amused.

"Hullo," said Rybble, sitting down beside me. "Some fried octopus, and hurry up with it, and some claret too."

I shared his wine with him. "Look at George," he said, "making rude remarks about the hats of the Royal Family. I know that wolvish incandescence of his eye; it's a positive obsession. But did you hear the latest about Anne? She's living in that slygrog place under her father's room, and if she gets too noisy he knocks his library of Mallarmé and Verlaine off the mantelpiece on to the floor——"

"What I object to in George," I burst out suddenly with a vehemence that surprised myself, "is the rotten musical criticism he writes. I was reading some only this morning. The same old things. Handel is *so* suave, like . . . like . . ."—my hand sought to describe in air the melodic suavity—"like bannisters; wood, polished wood, but wood all the same. For a grown man to listen to Handel's like a grown man sliding down bannisters; good for children. . . ." The metaphor became too complicated, I abandoned it. "Debussy's constraint contrasts so nicely with Wagner's steam-roller out on the loose. Covered passion! Of course! who ever heard of a rampaging jellyfish? Pelléas and Meliasande dribbling ninths like rumpless angels playing at quoits with haloes."

"Anne goes and knocks on the door for the money for her T.B. medicine, and he only puts his hand out. They're not speaking; and anyway she's too fat."

"Debussy seems so fluid; quite static. Really only trivial elements of Wagner flattened out by the hammer of the Gregorian modes, Moussorgsky. But don't expect a musician to see that; heaven preserve me from trying to analyse the musical image to a player or a critic of music. And Wagner welds a thousand images into a riotous unity, so many delicate gradations of gigantic colour patterned with a fiery humanity—he's a vulgarian because he builds a brazen bridge, a roar of gold, across tottering skies, a chasm of death. Of course, Siegfried should die to some feined twiddles on the flutes, a tomtit's agonies. We don't like music that shoves us like bugs against the walls of the theatre while its trudging splendours stamp past. All those trumpets. And how wrong to give us a love episode in the entirety of its lovely and mingling laughters. Ecstasy sustained without a blurred edge through a delirium of beauty. A million kisses clustered with clear and fragile petals in the big garden of the completed embrace. That is nothing beside some little sadness of hurt desire."

"I don't know anything about music," said Rybble.

"What is more vulgar than an etiolated refinement that lives in constant fear it will betray its bourgeois genesis by moving one inch outside its tiny area of æsthetic decorum? Whistler is the most vulgar artist that has ever been."

"Is he?" said Rybble.

"I know that critics like George must find miserable refuge from the realisation of what grand form is—and pretend that they're the only ones who understand what the poor benighted fool of a creator wrote in his sleep. Inspired; the gift of genius, never the gifts from genius; poets the holy idiots of some hypnotic infinity . . ."

"Humph," said Rybble.

George's knee was now closely touching Sylvia's, and for a moment they pressed hands under the table.

Why was it that I was no longer amused?

My enthusiasm for Wagner's honour had made me quite angry.

We went into the next room. It was full of moustaches and gesticulations floating above the unmirroring pools of smoky sham-marble.

I sipped the gritty sweet coffee and looked around. Near us sat a pair of Greeks deep in controversy. One was a pinched little man with a thin nose that took a reckless curve outward before it reached the safety of his brow. It affected one uneasily as sometimes an unsymmetrical arrangement will, making our fingers itch to reshape it. This man pleaded, shouted, stood up, prepared to climb over the table. The other, whose bald egg-like skull was imbedded in an immense stomach, puffed at a cigar. He was half-way through it, and the unbroken ash testified to his placidity.

At length the lean man reached the height of his declamation; he raised his fist, he breathed heavily, the hair in his nostrils stirred in the defiant blast.

The fat man slowly took the cigar from his mouth, opened his eyes so that they twinkled malevolently for a second out of the troughs of fat in which they had been immersed, and ejaculated one word in a fierce falsetto. The other hesitated, faltered, then fell face down on the table where he lay sobbing. The conical mass of flesh tapped the ash from its cigar, and continued smoking, restfully closing eyes.

Rybble was talking. "Anne said her best hats were ruined, but all Renée would say was: Well, I thought I went along to the end of the corridor; it isn't my fault. You'd think I did it on purpose the way you're going on. I must have walked round in a circle in the dark; I couldn't find the electric switch, and it was cheap wine anyway. What Anne said was, How on earth did she get the hatbox down from the top of the wardrobe if she was as drunk as all that?"

My mind drifted. What had the Greeks' discussion been over? A woman or politics? Did the fat one insult his friend's nose or refuse to pay for his coffee? The strange minds of those who have no minds. What did it matter? Humanity were only lice on the body of art. Make of them what you will. This was a little tableau of my own invented as a symbol of the

creative act. I flicked these funny animals out of my mind's slums to sit at this table, and distract me. Here was the gibbering consciousness before the implacable subconscious. Across the monstrous tangle of tangential thoughts and pernickerty sensations the patient depths snap out their ukase and we write the perfect poem or help our best friend's mistress, Sylvia, on to the bed; Sylvia, damn her. What is the creative concentration but the paralysis of the burbling consciousness by the snaky though unlocated eye, the hidden basilisk, of the subconscious? A Medusa-head freezing the stuff of the senses to the quick stone of an image.

> O thou secret Perseus,
> From thine armoured darkness,
> Lift up, lift up
> Thy Gorgon-head, and catch
> This kiss already half detached
> From the wind slippery in my mind
> And gone with flowers crumbling through sunlight.
> Lift,
> And turn to breathing stone
> This kiss's fading shape.

George and the others came in. He had hold of Sylvia's arm. I caught her eye in the glass opposite, as I had intended to, having first made sure my hair was arranged negligently. I did not smile.

They took a table by the window, and I felt a momentary pleasure in noting that George had left stains on Sylvia's white suède shoes. I knew that would annoy her, I knew her very well, though her shallowness was always a little baffling. Perhaps I did not know her quite so well as my anger believed; I certainly never knew what, if anything, she thought of me. But this would have been annoying her all the while. How our emotions crisscross. The greatest crises are veined with irrelevancies; a clock-tick can turn a stinging grief into the merest exasperation of bad temper. Here was a triple fugue—the dim thrills of swaddled contact, conversation, and calculations how far her shoes were being spoilt. A fly or an inconvenient pin can make a hypocrite of the most ingenious of love's little sensualities. Their knees touched.

"George," I said, "is another of those asses who think Beethoven's last sonatas are a collection of crabbed fugues. Think of that movement in the hundred and sixth."

"Never heard it."

"You can feel that march of anguish in your ribs: you're down in the mud, it's like boots on your face, an hysteria of courage; you put up your hand to your jaw to see if you're bleeding."

"Look here," said Rybble, "I don't understand music. I'm not interested in George. I'm going."

I rose with him. George stopped me as I passed. "I've that book for you, Meadows, if you want it. The part about the *chaîne ondulante des filles impudiques* is turned down."

"Thank you," I said effusively. I stood, turning the leaves over, aware that Sylvia, a dim suffusion of pink cigarette smoke on my left edge of vision, must be watching me. "I'd like to have a look at it. I'll bring it back to-morrow. Read anything else worth while lately?"

"Nothing much," said George.

I turned some more leaves over. Sylvia moved round to speak to someone at her other side. I could see her elbow now. "Well, thank you," I said. "I must be going."

"I don't want the cursed book," I complained as we descended the creaking darkness. "If there was no such word as *volupté* half the French novelists would have to retire. *Volupté*; it makes you think of a small fat Frenchman spreading unctuous palms in the air of a luscious blonde three times his height."

"There's a party to-night," answered Rybble.

"I don't want to go. Where is it?" I said.

"That house in Elizabeth Street where Joan lives."

"Who'll be there?"

"Oh, everyone."

I made up my mind not to go. But could I face an evening at the room in Yurong Street among the brothels, where I lodged with Ray? That room with its two sagging stretchers, its dirty primus stove likely to explode at any moment, which Ray used to light from round the side of the mantelpiece as a futile precaution, my four books, and the soiled heaps of manuscript. The only light was a kerosene lamp, the only furniture a small bamboo table which continually collapsed, and a stool. And I didn't want to face the sterile unechoing room of my mind. All poetry had been written. No poem rustled with moonlight into my head, rhythm was a dull beat of nerveless iambics, and the image a thing of sawdust-bowelled realism. Last night I had spent hours working at some verses on a hurdy-gurdy grinding Babylon out of moonlight, only to achieve a stodgy rendering of the banal idea of time's husk split with a returning memory; and it had been intended to utter such a sensitive and impalpable suggestion of crystal discords, imperfect cadences that resolved finally in some distant reply of flutes. What was I to do with the hours before bedtime? Sit in a park with the drunks? Tire myself by walking about the streets looking at the prostitutes and the covers of books in the shop windows? I hadn't even the money to go to a picture show.

"Oh, I suppose I might as well go," I said.

Joan came up to me.

"Why are you avoiding me?"

"I'm not."

"Come outside."

"Oh, no . . ."

"See, I knew you were avoiding me."

Her lower lip quivered, half-way between an invitation to a kiss and the looseness of grief. How ugly her straight protruding chin was. Her metallic expressionless voice was harder than usual, the golden brown of her eyes had ice-points of hate.

Hate, do I say? That girl never felt either love or hate; she lived in a dark space of cold sensualities, of inexplicable and pointless lies. I moved away.

"All right, you'll be sorry some day," she said, and pinched my forearm viciously. Someone had just played with great show of emotional expense Dvorak's *Humoresque* on a violin with steel strings.

"How could he bwing out the soul, the laughter and the tears, of such a pwitty work with howwible steel stwings?" said Dora to me, and licked some claret off her chin where it had dribbled. There was a drop lower down she could not reach.

"Allow me," I said, and licked it off. I was drunk too, of course. I took her outside on to the verandah. Beyond, the moths of traffic rattled their metal wings. Lights blurted. I kissed her.

"Take care what you're doing," said Clancy, squinting behind us. I let her go. He produced a revolver. I stood so that I could duck behind her if necessary, but he had turned towards the street.

"Look at all those blasted fools. In trams! thinking of races and beer and theatres, and not how they're duped by the bloody capitalist Press. Wage-slaves, fools, dupes, morons. You're a poet, aren't you?" He lurched fiercely towards me. "I'll give you a phrase to use, something real this time. Here's some real poetry for you, put this in a poem. A broom of bayonets. We'll come sweeping up that street yet with a broom of steel, we'll swab it out with blood. That's the only way to clean it up. Put that in a poem, will you? A broom of bayonets!" He thrust his face into mine, his eyes swelled out into squinting lanterns of malevolence in the bristly darkness of his face that touched me as he staggered.

"O, come on, silly," said Dora. "I want this dance. I do so love that piece, there's a duckey cowbell bit in it."

They went inside. I felt sick. I caught hold of the wrought-iron railing and looked down on all the bobbing hats. I hated them too, for different reasons. Nausea for this secret rage against self vented on the creature it assumes it desires to elevate, gnawed at my belly. My contempt for man, did it go hand in hand with this base self-repugnance? The Olympians, my Apollo and my Aphrodite, in whose personal existence I devoutly believed, were they only emblems of my revenge on man, on myself?

No. To face the parody of one's faith is the only real test. I share my five senses with all these tortured or inert animals, love's gorgeous laughter and the nectar of drunkenness go down to dark brothels of the flesh. Therefore, let us believe always that love and the strange thing for which the draughts of sunlight in the grape stand, cannot be defiled. They cannot.

Also, the revolver had frightened me.

At last I looked in at the window behind me at the revellers ghosted by a lace curtain. Sylvia was there. I saw that scared smile of hers. Should I go in and ignore her? I thought of our affair. The more I thought of it, the less I

felt I had ever learned about her and the ideas that shivered through her mind. She gave her mouth gladly; but beyond showing a faint laxity of pleasure, never actively begged for that sopped eternity of delight which is every proper girl's desire. When she opened her eyes after a long closure of their bland lids, they held no quick glint of disappearing kisses, no aftermath of ecstasy's starry blindness; only a slight puzzlement.

When I asked her if she loved me, she would way, "Do you think I'd give you this if I didn't?" Nothing more.

Then that last sweltering day when I had found her all alone in the house, an unexpected gift. How happy I had been at first. I found her come up from bathing, and blurred, to my senses, with a swimming coolness of femininity, an assured languor of beauty, as she lounged in her kimono, her feet over the arm of the chair, the slippers hanging at forty-five degrees from her toes. She smoked in that daintily amateurish way, as though each cigarette was the very first she had ever tried.

She had been annoyingly elusive, not with her customary aloof acceptance of a kiss, but with the intention of hurting. She seemed to divine each caress as soon as I thought of it, and thwarted it with some natural, some disconcerting movement, as though we were playing some chess of love in which she checkmated every kiss. And I became more clumsy at each subtle repulse, more enraged, more suave, more hopeless. Then in my resentment I treated her with extreme, with insulting respect, and we discussed *Hasaan* as though no kiss had ever come between our mouths. I deferentially disagreed with her, she grew colder and nicer, too, every minute. Then I left. She followed me out down the dark garden to the gate. I made a polite remark about the weather.

"I'll see you on Tuesday——" she began.

"Good-bye. I'd better hurry if I'm to catch that boat," I broke in, drowning her voice; and turned away hastily, falling over the rockery and barking my shins.

"Did you hurt yourself?" she called out after me, but I did not hear her. I was climbing up the wet glistening wooden stairs, above which was suspended the electric street lamp like a buzzing moon busy with insects of light.

My exaltation lasted me all the way into town. I had hurt her, I must have hurt her—badly. Then the cloudy joy hitting cymbals in my head vanished. I wanted her on any terms. Could I go back? Her husband would be home by now.

I swaggered into the drawing-room and drank off someone's glass of claret, and turning, bumped into Jean.

"What, again!" she said mockingly, and was gone.

Then I saw her leaning over Vraiden in a corner. He was hunched up miserably; she was holding herself up by her two palms pressed against the wall on either side of his head, reciting her own verse with tender gusto, occasionally stopping to kiss him.

I saw Sylvia watching me I must do something. A kiss, a kiss to show how little I cared how many women were

mine for the taking. Jean was kissing; kiss Jean. Kiss her, kiss by Sylvia seen—easy as falling off a log, bitch in the manger, ding-dong-dog. I walked straight across and kissed Jean.

Then I turned round to see how Sylvia had been impressed, but either she had not seen it or she was a good actress.

"You!" said Jean.

"Oh——well, you see," I said; "yes, it's me."

She stood measuring me with a mocking and affectionate hilarity. "Only you," she said. "I thought someone kissed me."

"I did," I answered, and walked off.

"Come here," she said, but I pretended not to catch her call. I wanted impartially now to hurt Jean or Sylvia. Jean on the whole more. Yes, Jean. The girl was so complacently destructive of all complacence, so infantilely vain, so sensible, so continuously on the point of making a fool of herself, but always recovering her witty balance of conceit on the brink. Sylvia floated, for me, across the crests of music in a pink foam, her eyes of dim blue gave one last appeal, and she ended in a thin spray of lace. She dissolved in my mind, leaving nothing of her peevish laughter, the affected lift of her plump shoulders that had so charmed my kisses. Now, I wanted to hurt Jean because Sylvia had hurt me—I mean because I had hurt Sylvia. I admired the strength of will that had knocked me stumbling into the rockery, forgetting how I had walked for hours outside the building in town where there was an odd chance of meeting her. But we did not meet until it was too late for even my dignity to allow me to make advances. But I'd take it out on Jean, I'd renounce her. But how was I to make my determination clear to her? I danced melancholily with myself, *l'après-midi d'un faune*, Jean once called me, the music spiraling through the heavy warmth of wine which had already added the tapping of a headache to the other rhythmic noises of the gramophone and the recurrent kisses. Suddenly as I came out of the lavatory I discovered that only a few of us were left.

"You'll come too," said Jean.

"I won't," I said; but the others pushed out and Jean had me by the arm. "Go to Vraiden," I said, not very loudly, not loud enough for her to hear.

At Jean's flat I sat on the armchair where I had sat cowardly, talking down the protesting kisses in my mind that afternoon; and watched the others dance in a cavern of yellow domed with a shaky drunkenness, a canopy of tiredness that threatened to drop at any moment upon the muddled dancers and drag them struggling to a pell-mell oblivion. I shut my eyes to calm the champing floor.

I opened them as the others were going out. I made a movement to get up.

"Oh, Peter," exclaimed Jean, "wait back a while, I want to give you those books I promised you."

I will humble her, I said to myself. I will say before everybody that there are no books, that there never were any books, that I hardly know the woman, that . . .

"Very well," I mumbled.

She came back into the flat, locking the silence. I looked at her.

"I saw that you were tired," she said, "so I sent the mob to Vera's. Wasn't that kind of me?" I continued looking at her.

"Wasn't it?" she repeated sarcastically, ingratiatingly.

"I'm not tired," I said. "I'm drunk."

"Well?" she answered. She lay flat on her back on the couch, her arms over her head. I resolved to have nothing to say. I was sitting stiffly at the other end of the room. In a few minutes I would get up, be overbearingly courteous, and leave her, foiled. But I must first have her worked up by an expectation of a capitulating laughter. I would take revenge for that conscious twitch of the thigh muscles—revenge because I was such a weakling as to need its so obvious effort of provocation.

She kicked her slippers off. I sat obstinate. She appeared to lose nothing of the distantly smiling content which lapped her; some secret source of joy fed her senses and overbrimmed in the slow drip of her smile.

"Why did you kiss me to-night?" she asked at length, out of her deliberate and malicious happiness.

"I was drunk, I suppose," I replied wearily.

"Do you always kiss girls when you're drunk?"

"Yes."

"But you said just now you were drunk, and I don't see any kissing."

I made no reply. Now was the time to rise and leave her. I went to rise, but she had anticipated my action.

"Get me another cigarette," she said.

I made to throw it over.

"Come over and light it nicely," she said.

I went across sullenly. As if so elementary a trick could deceive me or reverse my stressed refusal to respond.

I leaned over her with the cigarette in my hand, I leaned over her into the smiling area of her content, I leaned over her and I kissed her.

My soul came up, wrenched through my bowels. Her mouth would not let me go. Darkness hit me between the eyes, and I felt my eyeballs turn up dizzily through the pressing cope of black air, my empty skull. Her mouth held me, our mouths did not part; their closed and almost angry kiss took no notice of the rest of our fevered bodies.

I woke up, with difficulty snapping the pale meshes of dawn that clasped my lashes down.

"I do hope you like bacon and eggs," she said.

At Last: Chapter the Thirteenth

Darling,
Those flats of love balcony my mind
With all the secret mantilla'd kisses
Peeping through grates of laughter, dark and hot,
Like apples in a green pulp of shadows.

Laughter is all the shadows falling
Around those lovers, you and me, my girl . . .
Laughter with a dark glow netting the air,
And colours puffed by sunlight from your hair.

Laughter shadows us, tresses of silence
Plaited by your fingers as we lie
Counting love's kisses idling by.

Darling,
Ringed with your kisses like the foam of flowers
That breaks on the glassy gold of the shores
Of the mind's heaven reefed with moonlight's coral
And this couch with creaky springs,

I rose;
And, dear, those kisses falling through my mind
Like foam-bells prickt by sunlight, tinkle-gold,
Tugged rhymes from the belfry of the matted winds,
Rhymes bubbled foamily in and out my mind
And the gods came parting the brambles:

"Hullo, you . . .
What a long time you were. Look at Venus,
She's put on, to please you,
A specially modish nakedness.
Now you know where to find us—
Just ring a rhyme or two."

Darling, where's your mouth?
And hand me a pencil and paper:"

LUCIFER VISITS PAN

by BERTRAM HIGGINS

The river reed gulped its noise, squirrel and thrush
Sat dumb when the slim shadow of dark blood
Like a mock twilight fell on branch and bush,
And Lucifer and Pan met in a wood.
He whose soul, weak with elegies, roams lost
Through warm coherent worlds now steeped in wrack,
Trembled to see this young tenacious ghost
Coming with silver cities on his back.
But Lucifer's brusque mind that burns alone
Carving new orbits in the wilds of space
Paused for an instant in its blinding race—
Not blind to him who like a jilted moon
Leaned to re-fuel at his raging fire
Her dying craters with his deathless noon. [1924]

HAVE WE FREE WILL?

by ALBERT PARSONS SACHS

THERE are certain problems which are ultimately unsolvable. Do I perceive the blue of the sky as my neighbour does? I can never *know* though I may reasonably speculate. The fact that we both label it with the same name is no criterion of identity of perception. For both of us listen to a musical composition and we both agree that it is Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, and yet nothing can be more certain than that we do not hear it identically or even similarly in spite of the fact that we label it identically.

The problem of free will is ultimately one of the unanswerables. As human beings exulting in the exercise of our human powers there can be only one answer: we possess free will. But as rational and rationalising creatures, in a word, as scientists, we must examine the evidence and decide from the evidence before us.

The mechanist who believes that the laws of physics govern the majestic motion of the far-sweeping nebula and racing electron as it leaps from orbit to orbit without ever existing at an intermediate point, is certain that we are mechanisms, very complicated mechanisms, perhaps, and even occasionally lovely mechanisms, for mechanists have their moments, too, and these mechanisms obey those laws of nature which we have discovered through our observation of the simpler mechanisms which we study in the laboratory or observe in celestial motion. We have no free will, we are machines.

The non-mechanist, however, declares plainly that laws formulated from a study of measurable material bodies cannot be applied to the immaterial manifestations of the psychic processes. He concludes that we are free agents able to will freely; he generally continues by building up an ethical and moral system on the basis of this free will.

In so far as the decision of science has any validity in a problem the data of which are so imperfectly known it lies chiefly with the mechanists. Every function of the human body, every psychic manifestation which we have been able to analyse carefully, has proved to be subject to the simple laws of physics. This may mean merely that we have been able to analyse carefully only those phenomena which are in fact subject to the simple laws of physics and that those phenomena which actually are not governed by these laws are the very ones which the mechanist glibly says are so complex that we have not *yet* been able to analyse, expressing thereby his confidence that the reduction of these psychic phenomena to a simple physical basis is only a matter of time.

Even the confirmed mechanist is troubled about his own conclusions. Dr. Johnson's famous crucial experiment for the existence of matter, namely, kicking at a stone to prove its material existence, is one which analogously confronts him who denies the existence of free will. Forced along a logical path, he must believe that every human thought, every uttered word,

every draught of sweet wine, every dear stolen kiss, every act of loyalty, every betrayal, every inspiration of genius, every peal of laughter and every tear has been preordained since before the birth of time unto all eternity. And yet he finds himself thinking about this very problem with a seeming freedom from necessity which is disconcerting to any conclusion but the existence of free will. There is a sophistry in his logic which he emotionally feels regardless of that formal logical coherence which impels him to the conclusion that there is no free will.

Let us follow the mechanist's argument. Matter (he says) is subject to certain laws. To him a law has not that element of necessity or compulsion which the careless layman ascribes to a law. Why does a stone fall? The law of gravity *compels* it to fall, thinks our non-scientist. Our mechanist avoids this fallacy. He knows that the stone *does* fall and the *manner of falling* (not the cause!) is *described* by the "law of gravity." To the scientist a law of nature is merely a description of the behaviour of nature.

Our mechanist continues. Matter is subject to certain laws which scientific investigators have discovered. Matter behaves in certain modes which scientists have carefully observed and summed up in "laws." When sufficient observations have been made the law describing them is, in general, accurate and useful for *predicting* other similar phenomena. The law does not compel the predicted phenomena, it merely describes them. We have been carefully observing the behaviour of matter for several centuries and have discovered so-called laws of motion. The greater the force imposed upon a given body the more rapid is its motion. These laws represent the observed phenomena so accurately that we can use them for predicting the motion of bodies with great exactness. The gunnery expert is enabled to compute or predict the trajectory of a projectile hurled from a gun with marvellous accuracy; the astronomer is enabled to compute the motion of a heavenly body from these laws with awe-inspiring exactitude.

Our mechanist believes that every mental phenomenon is determined or described by a certain configuration or series of configurations of the brain cells or brain molecules, that is to say, in terms of the position and motion of the material particles of a thinking apparatus present in the person thinking. Even if this concept is erroneous in detail, nevertheless, he says, it is probably true that all mental phenomena are due to some specific arrangement of matter somewhere in us. The more we investigate the complex functions of the human body, the more we are convinced that the physical is the basis of the psychic. Anger is due to a higher concentration of adrenalin, which means that anger is due to certain arrangements of matter in our bodies. Love may also be occasioned by an internal secretion, and thus may also be due to certain varieties of arrangement of material particles in our bodies. Finally, says the mechanist, will, too, depends upon some arrangement of cells.

True, it would be a terrifically difficult, perhaps a humanly impossible task, to compute the position, velocity, mass and

the forces affecting each atom in the human brain, but theoretically it could be done and thereafter we ought to be able to compute the future position of each atom and with it the nature of each succeeding thought. Even if we cannot actually perform this computation, nevertheless the position and motion of each atom *are* definitely fixed according to previously mentioned simple laws of motion. And every thought, every act of the will, is conditioned by the ultimate structure of the matter of the brain and thus there is no freedom of the will. We are slaves in the hands of eternity.

The believer in free will brushes all this aside. Observations made on ordinary matter apply to them alone and cannot be carried by analogy over to the realm of the mind. Scientists should know how dangerous it is to reason by analogy. Thought and free will are not due merely to the material structure of the brain. And so the argument rages.

The mechanist lives in what we may call a law-abiding or a determinate world. He sees the orderly succession of cause and effect in an endless unbroken chain in which each link is bound to the link before it and equally bound to the link after it. In this linked chain there are no kinks, no breaks, no indeterminism. Free will would be a form of indeterminism in which a precedent set of conditions might lead to various consequent events depending upon the exercise of that will.

As a matter of fact, however, modern physical science no longer demands for the description of natural phenomena that degree of determinism which our scientific forebears and even our contemporaries have deemed necessary. It is true that we can compute the revolution of the earth about the sun with an accuracy of a hundredth of a second in a century of revolutions, but it does not follow that we can compute with equal accuracy the path of an electron about its nucleus. *That is carrying analogies too far.* In fact, the electron may not even have a determinate path about such a nucleus. And if we have an indeterminism of electronic motions then we may have a physical basis for free will even if all mental phenomena are mere manifestations of some configuration of certain material organs, bodies or other structures.

We have already learned that time and space are not absolute. Newton considered them separate and distinct concepts, and gave time and space an independence of each other from which Einstein rescued them. Einstein has been able to show that for cosmic phenomena time and space are interrelated. Other physicists have now shown that for the atom itself time and space are interrelated in a strange manner.

Do you not remember Archimedes' dictum? Give me a fulcrum and I shall move the world with a lever. Regardless of the authenticity of the statement we have a nice problem. Are we sure that such a lever *could exist?* This question is not totally absurd. We speak of the dimensions of an electron. But to measure lengths we must have measuring rods. Now it is clearly impossible to have measuring rods of less than molecular dimensions since the molecule is the smallest particle of matter which exists as such.

On paper it is simple enough to divide an inch into thousandths; we can *imagine* a division of each thousandth into millionths, but can we *accomplish* it? Mathematically we can perform operations which we cannot translate into physical acts. We can even conceive of slicing an atom of gold into half atoms of gold, but physically no such act is possible. Any rules which we may determine for slicing a bar of gold into halves, and each half into halves again, fail when we get down to molecular dimensions.

Take a crowd of human beings, all the humans who have lived since the birth of Christ, perhaps some thirty or forty billions. Shake well and mix thoroughly. Divide into halves. One half would be pretty much like the other. Halve the halves again. We might go for quite a number of halvings, let us say, ten halvings, and we would have 1,024 groups of about 40,000,000 each, each the population of a country almost as large as France or Italy. These 1,024 fractions of humanity might be very much alike taken by-and-large. They would contain the same proportions of blacks, yellows, browns, reds and whites, women and men, children and adults, geniuses and morons. Keep on dividing into halves another ten times and each group would now contain about 40,000. Still they would represent average conditions, *probably*. It seems possible that there might be an accidental segregation of morons and geniuses, but on the whole we could estimate in a general way the intelligence and behaviour of such a group. But if we halve ten times again and get groups of forty, it is less probable that the groups will be alike. And if we divide each group into five and get groups of eight, each will differ more and more from the others. If each group of eight is halved three times we will have *individuals* who are no longer the same as the group average. The individual may be Shakespeare or Lenin, Newton or Beethoven, or some speechless idiot or a Hindu priest or negro labourer or a college professor. And if we halved once more we would not have even the speechless idiot but only a few pounds of flesh and bones, be it from Shakespeare or from the idiot.

Rules describing the behaviour of men in the mass are not applicable to describing the behaviour of one man alone or of half a man. Rules applying to the behaviour of masses of matter do not apply to the behaviour of single molecules or atoms and certainly not to fractional atoms.

As this is important, let us consider another example. We have mortality tables which tell us that of a group of 100,000 men of the age of 35 so many will die in a year, so many in five years, and so many in twenty years. Considering that 100,000 is not a truly large number, the accuracy of these mortality tables as compared to experience is remarkable. As averages they are correct. But they do not enable us to predict the time at which any individual will die. There is a seeming determinateness about the expectation of life of a group which does not belong to the individuals of that group. About the individual's fate there is indeterminateness which averages up to determinateness in a large enough group.

Our laws of physics have been derived from a study of material bodies each of which consists of endless billions of billions of billions of molecules. Our laws of physics represent average behaviour, but averages of such vast numbers of individuals that the averages are constant regardless of any individual molecular divergences. There is a statistical determinateness about gross material phenomena which we must not ascribe to molecular and electronic phenomena without adequate proof.

It is the crowning achievement of modern mathematical physics that it has begun to understand this element of indeterminateness. The modern electronic physicist speaks of the probabilities of events rather than of their determinate course and he finds his analysis is more penetrating if he takes account of this indeterminism.

In the Dirac theory of the motion of electrons we have the furthest development of our modern theories of matter and energy. It is a characteristic of the Dirac and related theories that we cannot compute both the position and velocity of an electron at a given time. We can compute its position and we can calculate the probability that its velocity will not differ by a specified amount from the estimated average, or we can compute its velocity and we can calculate the probability that its position will not differ by a specified distance from the estimated average. In other words, there is an element of indeterminateness in the electronic behaviour of matter which we lose in the business of averaging up the motions of those endless billions of electrons present in the smallest visible particle of moving matter.

Even if mental phenomena are ordinary material manifestations, they are probably dependent not upon the coarse material structure of large masses of matter but rather upon configurations of a few molecules in the brain, or a number small enough so that the law of averages does not give them the determinateness which we find in ordinary material manifestations. There is thus in mental phenomena that degree of potential indeterminism which is necessary to furnish the physical basis for the existence of free will.

We end where we began with a *nescio*. But where such laws of physics as we had been able to develop in the past gave us no scientific basis for that intuitive confidence in the existence of free will which most subtle thinkers possessed, we are now armed with a new law based on new observations which makes it seem quite reasonable and in full accord with current scientific thought that we possess free will.

MOONSTRUCK.

O BEWARE of that witch the Moon she hungers the world,
pricking out a million palates of new desire
in mouths that never were dry for want of lips
and a tongue to suck the marrow from a kiss.
She gluts our eyes with her pale, mirage fire
and over the roofs, over the trees she has curled
those fumes that blur the edges of a dream . . .
Still, fearfully still we lie for she breathes the hiss
of lovers startled in perilous adulteries,
flashing their adieux with ghostly sparks in the beam
that will light their way across dark balconies . . .
All the whispers ever panted through the hair
of maidens shy, incredulous to hear
that there was magic, mystery in the mere
pouting fall of their breasts she sighs upon the air
till we feel Love ripening, bursting everywhere.
And showering down through the leaves those splinters
of light,
fragments of a crystal shattered against the night,
she lifts from the silent surf of the hawthorn tree
Madelaine standing in a froth of lace;
and men astir outside go mad in the face
of all the beauty that stared from the ports of Troy.
She has filmed their eyes with silver and they see
Iseult in every street and Isabeaux
leave strangling trails of scent wherever they go:
they pause and shudder because in their blood the joy
flames frigidly like the wraith of a star in snow—
That terrible joy of loving impossibly.
Who, aching, yearning now with the Moon's chill pain
will help me hunt her back to the hills again:
on the lonely hills she can drive no one insane?
Come! Let us untether our galleon tree and dip
her marbled prow to the golden spume of stars.
Fair breaks a gale from the rosery. Her spars
shudder awake and belly their topsails out.
Then, suddenly, we are away. A shadow foams
up from the stern and over the world we slip,
over the gardens puffing their trades of scent,
over the streets, over the roofs and the domes:
a sea held still and silent at the Pole
As lips are frozen in Love and eyes in Fear.
Orion, sprawling across the sky, has bent
His back to watch and see what we are about.
Beware, beware! He'll fling us down that hole
Between the stars or drown us in one of those pools
Of bubbling gold. The clouds' windchargers start
In a panic and snort; the Pleiades, scattering, shout.
See! the sky has rioted under our plunging prow.
Only the Moon stands firm but we touch her now . . .
O! O! She has struck with her silver shaft and gules
Of silver blood throb mortally from my heart.

Brian Penton.

POETRY AND LIFE

WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO DRAMA AND THE IAMBIC PENTAMETER.

by JACK LINDSAY

I. We hear many laments over the fact that the poet's relation to society has become so distorted that the few skew-whiff tangents of his contact with the frame of things can do nothing but plunge him into a decadence which finds instinct and emotion both smothered in inhibition. Consequently, the theme goes, the poet can only invert the whole creative function and seek to express repression, as though by flaunting a mutilated spiritual corpse in the nostrils of reality it condemns reality and takes revenge upon it. The most banal expression of this comes from that typical shabby-genteel intellectual T. S. Eliot, whose work was so utterly devoid of any poetic identity that it struck at once the key of deflated energy and thus became at a stroke a popular exposition: a popular exposition of drab wouldbe sensibility (i.e. resentment at having no sensibility) among all the snobs who imagined themselves removed from the plebs of georgian goodfellowship and who found in this dull rhetoric a smug selfcongratulation on their own futility. Actually there is expresst no awareness of true intellectual despair, only the hurt of a minor egotism before the dirty indifferent machine of existence. The technical ineptitudes (the rhetorical playing for safety, the evocation of poetic tone, by continual allusiveness both metrical and substantial—altogether different from direct allusion for the purposes of a new departure and from the use of old thematic material for a new drama)—all this exposes if not expresses culture at its last gasp. In fact, the intonation which alone gives significance to this verse is a thin nasal bank-clerk whine; and read aloud with a delaying and depresst cadence it assumes its proper human definition: the end of the bourgeoiserie. Let us gratefully snuffle up these odours of death; for the death of something old can always become the signal of the birth of something young.

If Dowson was the melancholicpassionate adolescent, here is the shabby-genteel complacently and neatly airing his culture like a wardrobe of presst trousers. This neatness which has been mistaken for rhetorical strength is basically a spiritual weakness: not a condition of determinate form, but of indeterminate emotion, which walks a narrow line of negative statement, frightened alike of platitude and passion, of vagueness and concretion.

As an example showing what his admirers call his power of evoking the natural poetic rhythm of ordinary speech, the following will suffice (from *The New Criterion*, October, 1926: the dramatic fragment is ushered in by a quotation from the *Choephoroi* and St. John of the Cross, so that you *must* know it is *really* profound):

> Hello Hello are you there?
> Yes this is Miss Dorrance's *flat*—
> Oh Mr. Pereira is that you? how do you do!

Oh I'm *so* sorry. I *am* so sorry
But Doris came home with a terrible chill
No, just a chill
Oh I *think* it's only a chill
Yes indeed I hope so too—
Well I *hope* we shan't have to call a doctor
Doris just hates having a doctor
She says will you ring up on Monday
She hopes to be all right on Monday
I say do you mind if I ring off now
She's got her feet in mustard and water
I said I'm giving her mustard and water
Allright, Monday you'll 'phone through.
Yes I'll tell her. Good bye. Goooood bye.
I'm sure that's very kind of *you*.

That would do rather well as an example of an avoidance of every possible poetic problem of dramatic verse. Later on I wish to analyse what is the real problem of contemporary verse-drama. This may stand very well for the bedrock of poetic inertia from which our effort must start. Certainly, it includes the present idiom of speech, for the simple reason that that is all it is: odd casual remarks selected so as to produce an effect of metrical order. Of creation there is nothing. Still, being good easy verse and obviously speech, it will serve as the limit of inertia. Out of this thin strangulated line we must create melodic purpose and harmonic intensity.

II. What does this complaint of the out-of-joint poet then signify? It is no use appealing to the homeric definition, with the poet's apparent hearty acceptance of full-blooded life, and ask how we can have anything but repudiation for the task of glorifying generals and stockbrokers and the other tigers, pigs and rabbits of the social jungle.

Conditions have changed. The consciousness of the poet has deepened with the widening of circumstances. Every such deepening and widening will bring its peculiar problem, its disintegrating influence and its potential integration. I consider the present age to be the most suited for nurturing poetry since the Renascence. Indeed I can only perceive two or three other periods since the homeric which I would care equally to inhabit. Similarly rich moments and places were: Sappho's island, where, in a period of violent social change, the homeric objectivity clotted into a personal realisation of flesh and emotion; the periclean Athens, where the homeric values were shaken by an expanding imperialism and a new perception of human responsibilities (Aischylos to Euripides, with Aristophanes as release); the Rome of Catullus, when the imperial expansion was accompanied by a sudden splitting and intensification of the poet as individual; the moment of Villon when the terror of the dark ages of faith became aware of itself and the human spirit rebelled; the Renascence in England when the rapid national expansion flooding across an age of religious upheaval swirled into the dramatic conflicts of Shakespeare.

III. It cannot be denied that the anarchistic condition of mind generated in all sensitive intellects by the war of 1914-18 is the prime fertilising soil of poetry. Let this shock of fear

once recede and a corresponding lyricism is produced. It may be objected that there has been no external expansion to counteract the isolation of the individual, no burst of energy to disperse the miasma of nervestress. But I think this objection is trivial. The huge additions to our intellectual consciousness can give us all the tidal urgency of a world in fervent growth, once we have found the point on which to centralise our aspirations and contempts. That point of course is Self; but the new Self born from this new relativity of laughter and hate.

For consider: Having the Renascence directly behind us, we cannot merely repeat the Shakespearean *agon*. That pain and delight, which reveals the individual grappling with a practically undiscovered moral-universe, cannot be re-enacted in the same way. If we are to build we must build upon Shakespeare, out of him: organically, not merely making faces and toilets in his mirror. Only by intensifying our self-consciousness-as-poet can we hope to continue growing; finding new mirrors in which to view Shakespeare. The vitalising principle, as always, must come from within.

Nationalism exists now only as a reactionary principle. With the arrival of the proletarian revolution the human horizon has been so far extended that we are forced back insistently upon individuality as the sole universal principle (*i.e.* in the sphere of experience of course, not of cheating). The political variation between Henry Ford and Nicolai Lenin is not the most important one—the chasm in intellect between the two does not need stressing: no one is likely to mistake Ford for even a human being. The true conflict, which however must express itself in the struggle for the control of the instrument of production and distribution, narrows itself down to the question: Which party will centralise its organisation on the needs of the individual, his right to experience. As Norman Douglas pointed out in No. 5, it was here that we see the failure of the *Imperium Romanum*. It ended by becoming, for all its splendid constructiveness, the bureaucratic machine. The english, chief latterday exponents of this *Imperium*, for a time kept a crafty balance between the vitalizing passion of this adventure with its petronean recoils of debauchery, and the inevitably suppressive inertia of the machine. This balance, never too sure after the elizabethan ardent cunning was scattered by the puritan commercial bad-conscience, flattened out its original machiavellianism into the selfduping hypocrisy of Democracy: a creed so imbecilely futile that only centuries of lies could possibly bring about its acceptance even verbally. The hellenic state of equal free citizens, leisured among a slaveclass doing all the dirty work, is applied to free and slave alike. The result is not that all are free but that all are slaves. All that has happened is what Nietzsche calls a moral transvaluation. In the evasions of a moral decadence the word *free* is claimed by the slave, now doubly enslaved, in order to dope his own mind and befoul all efforts towards true freedom.

The *bolsheviki* are in my opinion a genuine expression of the roman constructiveness. In any case the russian revolution displays a huge and happy uprush of the human spirit; and this

brimming worldtide of new energy is to be seen even in the reactionary military dictatorships among the latins and the commercial dictatorship of the United States. England, bogged in the product of its own cunning and so now its own dupe, remains outside this hurry of energy, whether of the constructive russian kind or the sporadic american. It is among this international expansion that the poet must find his vindication of Force.

IV. This is not to be misunderstood as a statement that the poet will be particularly interested in the politics of these complications—or rather, since he cannot but yield his admiration and hopes to all aspiring freedoms, that he will involve himself in any organisation or allow himself to externalise his hope and interest so far as to identify his faith in life's selfcreative energy with any social form it may be using. The extreme self-consciousness to which I have alluded, with his emphasis on the individual's nerves and senses, will see to that. We are too sceptically balanced to believe that any external organisation can have its bricks cemented with eternity, as all social theorists since Plato's *Republic* believe too easily. But that balance is not real unless we are able to harmonise both our acclaiming response to the turmoil of life and its brave struggle to construct a freedom, and our anarchistic contempt for all fools who do not realise that any external condition must at once begin to destroy itself by its own inertia. Both these emotions must be centralised upon a point of selfknowledge: a love and a scorn for self synthesized in the freed impulses of æsthetic creation.

The essential then is that we can feel the existence of a violent conflict in space about us, that we can symbolise this conflict *within* the creative act—feeling both an extension of all our emotional and intellectual doubts and ardours in the world's travail, and a mirroring of that travail in our own continuing effort. Once that diaphragm is establisht, we can trust to the creative impulse to find the contemporaneity of our expression. Everything we write will be saturated with the immediate significance which alone can vanquish time, whether the theme be Atlantis or a busride. The drama or lyric of a man alone with a woman can become potential of all future cosmogonies and travailing societies.

The essential then is that the creator's conviction of the immediacy and sanctity of Energy find its vindication in a world that is furiously in vital disintegration. It is the creator's business to find his own individual form and exposition. With that the world as such has nothing to do.

V. What is so wrong, so sterilising, about the statement in the mouth of a T. S. Eliot that the creator must make a contemporaneity of all culture and himself create from the centre of his epoch, is that, being made abstractly, it commences by insulating the creator against the very thing with which he is assuming contact. It can therefore only achieve a rationalistic approach to life, *i.e.* tries to find formulæ for life's fluidity and laments because the earth spinning irrationally through the

seasons has no purpose. It can only apprehend intellectually instead of with the whole man, and so ungraciously seeks to retort its own frustration upon life's contempt, thereby flattering all minor and bruised egotisms. It is vitiated at the core.

In the case of a meagre intellect such as T. S. Eliot's the result can be pleasing and effective (for we all like to have our bruised egotisms massaged tenderly) since there never was any imagic potentiality or any emotional basis of individuality; but in a richer nature such an abstractly selfconscious intention can only result in muddle and misery. That is why the effect of such verse on young minds is evil.

VI. Further, I do not mean that any poet, even the simplest lyrist, can remain snugly at the core of creative spontaneity, in full harmonious contact with the Eternal Delight of energy. That would be mere godhead (platonic not hebraic) and would annihilate the whole satanic irony of earth's construction. For Shakespeare to develop from *Venus and Adonis* to *Antony and Cleopatra* by a purely lyric compulsion would be impossible. To own this capacity for ecstasy is to own an equal capacity for despair; and in Timon, Lear, Hamlet and Macbeth Shakespeare shows the incessant questioning and revolt (the decadence) of his spirit.

But the balance is kept. The acclamation of energy proceeds side by side with this rebellion of the nerves and the brain and the heart. Joy always cleaves the heart of torment, like a pulse within a pulse. For the balance is kept. It is the whole man who is facing the problem. Not an æsthete, or a metaphysician, or a sociologist. Not any theorist, but a poet, the whole man.

VII. I look upon this age then as the best possible for a poet. We have already had our philosopher, the projector and anatomiser of our subtleties, Nietzsche, as the elizabethans had Machiavelli, the elaborator of their moral revaluation who cunningly canalised their rebellion.* That there is great stress now upon the poetic mind is natural. That is proof that the tennysonian shell has crackt badly. All the false attitudes of the magistral poet to society, and of patronising society to the poet, are swept away. We are once more face to face with life. It is life once more, not society. We are poets once more, not bards. To hell with the lamenters.

VIII. When the first revolutionaries began their work it seemed that to disrupt form was to reachieve spontaneity. Climbing out of the ruins the simpletons have proclaimed once more the necessity of Order, of Tradition: the whole tradition, they say, not merely a victorian fagend. The proclamation is only too just, if it were not the criers are themselves the fagend of victorianism, tincans to the tail of that once landseerian hound. For abstract definitions in æsthetics mean nothing

* To prevent Wyndham Lewis compiling a number of the *Enemy* in proof of my malevolent plagiarism I had better state that he had written a book on this point, or rather around it; for he makes very little of his thesis, divigating into his usual prattle (*The Lion and the Fox*).

by themselves. What is the emotion behind this cry for Order (classical purity) which T. S. Eliot has sought, aping the neocatholics of France, to impose on England?

It is nothing but fear. The origin of the earlier attack was largely resentment, *canaille* anarchism; here we have fear. Faced by the need to redefine the function of the poetic, with the horrible examples of *blague* all about and Twilight-of-the-gods festooning horizons with thunder, the æsthete tries to state some solidarity of the human spirit, some hypothetical contemporaneity, seeking among jazz carburetors and cinemas for the *abracadia* which once spoken will petrify life into a formula, resolve the chemistries of its madness. Timidly aware of the failure of the pure anarchists and striving to mask a fear of life and a knowledge of personal insufficiencies, he falls back on the plea for Authority. What is wrong with the present age is its lack of all authoritative teaching. Dante could savagely perfect his hell of *terza rima* because he had a granitic hell of theology to back him. (It is not perceived that the granite of the church is a mere eggshell to the tough resentment of his tortured soul; that puritanism, following the elizabethan revolt from authority, supplied Milton with his similar instrument of hate; and that, given the hater, the policy of conservative party of England A.D. 1929 would feed as great an authoritative lash of form.) We have no settled social, moral or æsthetic values, so we can do nothing. At best we can cast back for some authoritative principle, some externalised pledge. So T. S. Eliot returns to the divine right of kings (which would have had my backings under stuart rule, but . . .), laudian anglo-catholicism (most futile effort to pump blood into a putrescent corpse, in order to uphold something that could never have been upheld even by the once-kicking sinews), abstract critical traditionalism (an effort to patch up yet another corpse into a mummy).

All this is no doubt right enough in what it protests against—democracy and slatterns of romanticism—but the means used run at every point counter to the true and constructive contemporaneity of which I spoke earlier.

But Eliot, for all the selfprotective meagreness of his output, has now sufficiently exposed his own threadbare intellect. He can be safely left to destroy himself. He can now no longer be taken seriously, *i.e.* he will now become a meekly popular poet, alluded-to reverentially by reviewers and written-up in articles every now and then.

It is rather the general effect of this depression I attack, its obliteration of all capacity to respond spontaneously to the genuine creative potentiality of our rich epoch. We must find our authority in ourselves: not in any mere anarchistic irresponsibility but in a fusion of an utter sympathy for all truthfully instinctive life (behind which looms an awareness of the world-problem, the struggle against democracy and bureaucracy for concrete individual freedom) with a critical perception and love of all past æsthetic and philosophic effort. And all this to be interpreted and filled out in terms of our own personal experience —while the vindication of the new moral relativity (at once

ruthlessly anarchistic and yet sympathetic with all life) is to be found in the einstinian physics.

I cannot understand the cowards who flinch before these sudden new spaces and look outwards for a pat on the back and a timetable: a Cook's-Tour of eternity. Of course the future of such a voyage is dangerously uncertain. Shakespeare's future was dangerous when he began *Venus and Adonis*. If he could have foreseen Timon and Lear would he have put down the pen? Of course not. Did he look to Hooker for the solution of Hamlet's conscience, his inability to see purpose and responsibility in work? He knew that Mary Fitton knew a hell and a heaven of a lot more about the polity of life than any Hookers. (She still does.) Do you think he felt any less outraged at being snubbed by idiot gallants and written down as a vagabond by the law and lumped with the crowd of versifiers (sneeringly) as a good businessman (which of course he was) do you think he felt any less outraged than we do at watching the slugs and gorillas taking the beautiful women and the laughters of the world?

IX. There is no solution, no authority, for the muddle any moment of the world presents, when viewed abstractly. There is a solution for me, and a solution for you, at given moments of our developments, crystallisations of the will, æsthetic formulations of purpose. There is no solution for society, none for man in the mass.

First definition of Irresponsibility—to ask: Where can I find a sanction for my act?

When Shakespeare wrote

> Those milky paps that through the windowbars
> Bore at men's eyes

he wrote with authority, he found a momentary and so eternal solution and formulation of the world, clotting it to an image of desire, vitally arresting function and liberating it. When Milton wrote:

> Thrones, Dominations, Princedomes, Vertues, Powers,
> If these magnific Titles yet remain
> Not merely titular, since by Decree
> Another now hath to himself ingross't
> All Power, and us eclipst . . .

he was writing with external authority enough, but in fact he was writing simply nothing at all, making no formulation, merely repeating barrenly an abstract arrestment of life's purposes.

All great poetry, which encompasses the definition of a completed human existence—Sappho, Aischylos, Aristophanes, Theocritos, Catullus, Villon, Shakespeare—has been the result of a discovery within the individual of a new responsibility, a new orientation of self towards experience, which creates its own form by impetus, never by meditation. The core I mean of authority is utterly individual. Whatever external sanctions or conflicts are involved, the moral and æsthetic core is anarchistic self-willed.

(It is only a fool who, looking back, imagines that the æsthetic and moral authority the creator appears to impose upon his period was a condition perceptible to his contemporaries and not an illusion produced by the malice of time. In any case it is only the great haters, Dante and Milton, who invoke strongly the support of externalised sanction. They need a rod. They need God.)

This does not mean of course that creativeness is all selfwill. The test of its strength and validity lies rather in the discipline it can impose upon itself, and the width of life and intellect it can dominate. We are therefore in the uncomfortable position of agreeing with the late æsthetic revolutionaries in their thesis that the spontaneous element is the creative core, and with the present traditionalists who insist that art is nothing without discipline. But both the sloppy discords and disintegrations of form, and the lack of tonality the overhard edges of the neoformalists, are equally evasions of the problem of the completed image.

We must achieve discipline. But we cannot impose it abstractly. It must be the discipline of our activity, our peculiar relativity of sense intellect and emotion. And so we can only discover our discipline by discovering our energy: an act of selfknowledge, creatively precipitated, not learned by theory or imitation.

As an example of what T. S. Eliot is not, and to show that I do not wish blindly to pile together everything not noisily hearty for condemnation, let me mention *Invocations to Angels* by Edgell Rickword, which shallowly read might seem to come under the categories of my attack. But this is incorrect. Here indeed is stated a dissatisfaction with the death that christian industrialism has forced upon all human integrities; but the statement does not rest there. It does not accept hopelessness as Eliot's does. Behind it moves a lyrical challenge, a continually implied contrast of delight. This is because the attack is made by the whole man, who delights even in the spectacle of his own despair. Take these verses from *Poet to Punk*:

> Among these streets my vagrant fancy roams
> for scraps of sympathy, love's well-scraped bones,
> but the beds creaking in a million homes
> with nature's vast excuses proffer stones.
>
> My body leans, that beggar emaciate,
> starved of all solace, at the open sash.
> Night-long I burn in candour's hollow grate
> till housemaid morning sifts my wasted ash.
>
> I have a wealth of words to thrill your ear,
> (my soul drips honey though my pen seems tart).
> If I had your number, my postulated dear,
> this is the conversation I would start.
>
> "I am the Noah of the final Flood
> and preach precaution to an ironic Park.
> To you, related by closer ties than blood,
> I offer the sole ticket for my ark.

"When the last spires tilt to the rising waves
and what was city seems a foundered fleet,
we shall lean out and peer in sumptuous caves
once interdict to our laborious feet . . .

"I have no fortune to lay out on stores;
no animal but you joins me for love
or keep. How query the presumptive shores
unless hope hatches faith's poor innocent dove?

"No wing may pierce that calm, last, vast, daft scene;
no beak pillage unimaginable banks.
Now gods abandon the effete machine
the future functions through our rejected flanks."

The poetic statement cannot remain here; but made from this angle it stimulates resistance and is a legitimate part of the poetic schema, elegiac not dramatic.

X. I am concerned here chiefly with dramatic poetry; so first I shall recapitulate what seem to me the chief elements to be synthesised by poetic consciousness if it is to achieve full contemporaneity and individuality. For though the lyric poet can create tangentially, the dramatic poet must face a continual revaluation and synthesis.

Firstly: the elizabethan definition: Marlowe's verve, the explosive first essential of tragic experience, the release of manhood (utterly different from, say, the swinburnean adolescent release) upon a space of danger—— Shakespeare, the integrated man, at one end facing the terror of the Act, which chains him to an eternal recurrence of death (*Macbeth*), at the other end realising the delighted eternality of life's purpose in the remorseless blood of sex (*Cleopatra*). The heritage of form from here will be discussed later.

Secondly: the imagic development which has occurred since in Keats, Beddoes, Francis Thompson and the Sitwells; as well as the enriching of the whole creative consciousness by plastic and musical developments.

Thirdly: the emotional complications in Blake's awareness of the subtly disintegrating organisations of the self, with a pendant in Yeats' symbolism.

Fourthly: the intrusion of the peasant, of primitive consciousness, with the consequent emphasis on generalised clarities, significant simplicities.

Fifthly: the effort to revivify blank verse after the tennysonian flatness ebbed rosily into Stephen Phillips: this effort to be seen at its clearest in Lascelles Abercrombie.

Sixthly: the necessity to eliminate all the realistic paraphernalia which has grown up in the last century, to get back to the tradition of the blood instead of merely seeking to thin out the victorian muddle still further in the hopes of reaching back to a pure poetic instrument: the necessity to eradicate from our minds all the puerile society-dramas and all the barren theatrical-intellectual aldermanism of Bernard Shaw.

Seventhly: to perceive the method of psychological exposition begun by Ibsen. This method, with its affinities in the far

more deeply-rooted tragic content of Dostoevski's novels, must be absorbed, since it will be the basis of all variation from the shakespearean. But it is only the point of departure. Ibsen had not sufficient creative power in the last resort to be anything more than an innovation, to go further than positing moral problems without grappling with their solution. Of course there is no such thing as a final moral solution; but there is a culmination of æsthetic definition which achieves the effect. Cleopatra's death, Macbeth's death, give us the emotion of a finality, a completion of nemesis, though actually they solve nothing for the problems of love and of despair as they have to be lived. They merely intensify the power by which we live them. Both images give me the same emotion of release, though one rivets despair in hell and the other kisses the hand of enheavened love. The moral solution is a constructive ecstasy. Ibsen fails there. *Rosmersholm* exposes his dilemma. Unable to construct poetically he is forced to seek an intellectualized solution, a statement, and so to choose suicide for his lovers. But there is no moral or æsthetic release: up to that point there has been at least a strong tragic suggestion of character, but the conclusion produces merely a theatrical shudder. The suicide has merely a moral effect of morbidity, thereby nullifying all tragic conviction, and an æsthetic effect of makeshift. It posits a problem only to evade it.

Dostoevski, with such dramatists as Strindberg and Wedekind, comes closer; but the fascination of his psychological analysis must not blind us to the fact that the poetic, the whole man, is not present, though at times tantalisingly haunting the theme with his ghost.

Eighthly: There are all the expressionist and other experimental devices which have been introduced, the efforts from Gordon Craig onward to make production adequate to interpret the symbolism of poetry.

Ninthly: There is the whole area of miming, the Russian Ballet; and most important of all the original Dionysia behind the mime. There is no reason why an added vigour should be given the drama by clarifying the ritual basis of the orgiasm comoidic (the copulation of energy with earth, the lovers traversing a tangle of difficulties into the happiness of the embrace) and tragic (the release of ecstasy, disintegration and death in terms of rebirth, the conquered suddenly projected as the conqueror by ecstasy over the fact of defeat).

An effort has been made by W. B. Yeats in his *Four Plays for Dancers*, inspired by the Noh plays, to lift the drama altogether out of its stagey bog and concentrate it back to a clarity of poetic symbolism. These little plays are somewhat too precious for their method to have much immediate application. But if we reconsider their intention in relation to the hellenic method of linking dramatic scenes by choric lyrics and the elizabethan conventions of time—space (tantamount to construction by action alone, its gusto and selfgenerated pattern obliterating all temporal and spatial considerations as such)—then we see here a potent suggestion for escape from the realistic stage. Gordon

Bottomley* however has alone sought to develop this hint in *Scenes and Plays* which carry on this transfusion of lyrical blood and do away with the whole deadening mechanism of the realistic stage, its scenery, exits, entrance, and particularly its clumsy and hopelessly ineffective means of securing continuity. Here it seems to me is the seed of the formal revitalisation of drama, as in Dostoevski is the essential tumult of the nerves which have to be subdued by the shakespearean discipline if we hope for a rebirth of Dionysos' *agon*.

XI. It may seem that it is hopeless even to attempt the absorption of all these divergent impulses. But I for one do not think so. Part of the muddled neoclassicism of today is an effort to narrow down poetic expression to a clearer rhetoric, scraping away all muzzy romantic suggestiveness. This is good in so far as it clarifies the instrument, bad in so far as it evades the full poetic potentiality of experience. Undoubtedly too much vague and shallow byeways of poeticality have been opened up; but we must not let a reaction against romantic blurs of form blind us to the necessary luxury of overtone in all fine poetry, any more than a reaction against tinny onedimensional statement in verse should prejudice against the necessary sharpness of emotional rhetoric. Poetry indeed is neither a matter of mistily evocative nuances or plastic bulges. It is poetry, with its own natural statement, the clearer the better.

But it is as barren to expect poetry to return to an unadulterated emotional rhetoric as it is to write verse in greek. And drama by its very nature must define the whole man or it is nothing: it is either bombast or drawingrooms. When I say that poetry must absorb Music I mean the opposite of what Verlaine meant by that term. I mean the extreme rich-clarity of sensual definition which Music by its bloodbeat can achieve so immediately, should now become a part of the poetical consciousness. A part; that is all—the problem being reanalysed in term of the *métier's* limitations. That is, verse seeks to use words in a way to liberate their richest sensual-essence, but a verbal essence. Thus, an element of music becomes poetry: thus, the area of a mode is deepened.

I mean merely that poetry should be the poetic expression of a whole man, not the partial expression of a poet.

XII. I leave at this the psychological problems the new drama must face if it is to be sincere. Each poet must discover his own responses and recoils in life itself. I have sufficiently outlined my attitude and indicated the angle at which faith and despair must meet in a modern mind both delighting in energy and yet detaching itself with intellectual scepticism.

The technical problems of drama, as of all verse, are twofold. Firstly, as to general structure; secondly, as to diction and metre.

In the structure of drama the need is to find a new point from which lyricism (I mean of the condition of mind) can be added to the intellectual and moral conflicts of modernity.

* I owe much of the present analysis to Mr. Bottomley's own criticism as well as his personal encouragement.

My sympathies go to an effort to use the expressionist method of breaking structure wherever one wishes, so as to escape the tedium of the stage—the material itself to be treated realistically as far as emotional definition is concerned, but some lyrical device such as Yeats and Bottomley have imported to be used to harmonise and to bridge the transitions. Thus we can return to the ritual release of the drama, the freedom and space of the hellenic form, the bustle of the elizabethan scene, plus all the modern additions of psychology and imagery. Yeats hints at a method whereby a lyrical comment can be introduced upon the dramatic action. How startling is the cry of the musician (not an actor) in *At the Hawk's Well*, coming unexpectedly as we watch the Hawkwoman dancing :

> O God protect me
> From a horrible deathless body
> Sliding through the veins of a sudden.

This effect, simple as it is, suggests infinite possibilities of criss-crossing lyrical and dramatic elements—the former adding, instead of the hellenic generalised comment, an immediate emotional plangency, making subtly intricate the relation of spectator and actor, returning to the ritual basis by this almost frightening implication of the spectator in the drama.

As an example of what I mean I describe briefly the method of a play on which I am working, *Hereward*. In this no curtains are used, but at the end of each episode there is complete darkness during which a lyric personal in nature but suggested by the drama is declaimed against a background of music. At the end of the lyric the lights are switcht on again, the actors for the next scene have taken their positions and the action continues. There is no scenery, and no properties except one bench. One is thus given a chance to create complete continuity ; and by slight variation and complication of lyrical devices to avoid and yet express all the scenes impossible for the stage, such as battles, etc. One is also thus able to waver between the dionysian rite and a cinema-technique with no discord, using expressionistic short-hand where necessary with a minimum of muddle.

XIII. Since all theories of poetical diction are now discarded, the problem of diction becomes a problem in the relation between colloquialisms and the meditated phrase or the sensual image, and so can be treated side by side with the metrical problem. I therefore propose to analyse with examples the various solutions to the handling of the iambic pentameter.

The early elizabethan blank verse with its regular sentence-lengths and consequent cloying number of full cadences found in Shakespeare a complex variation of cesura and period. Shakespeare shows a particular fondness for stopping at the second or third foot a sentence which has been running already for one or two lines. Here is a passage which exemplifies his cunning as well as his use of the stop at the end of the second foot for sharper emphasis and at the end of the third for a fuller sense of finality :

Never *Iago*. Like to the Ponticke Sea,
Whose Icie Current, and compulsiue course,
Neu'r keepes retyring ebbe, but keepes dueon
To the Propontick, and the Hellespont:
Euen so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace
Shall neu'r looke backe, neu'r ebbe to humble Loue,
Till that a capeable, and wide Reuenge
Swallow them vp. Now by yond Marble Heauen,
In the due reuerence of a sacred uow,
I heere engage my words.

Even when his verse more nearly approaches speech, and agitated speech at that, he keeps to an extension of the same method:

play (Boy) play, there haue been
(Or I am much deceiu'd) Cuckolds ere now,
And many a man there is (even at this present,
Now, while I speake this) holds his Wife by th' Arme,
That little thinkes she ha's been sluyc'd in's absence,
And his Pond fish'd by his next Neighbour (by
Sir *Smile*, his Neighbour:) nay, there's comfort in't—

We see nowhere a conflict between rhythm and intonation. The rhythm is that of everyday speech, intensified, complicated, enriched; it is still constructed on an emotional ascension or deflation which nowhere jars upon an imposed scheme of metric. The metre is perfectly flexible to the emotional demands and nowhere gives the impression of stultifying or distorting the common idiom. Certain sentence-lengths, varied, broken, tangled, but always cut out by the same clear law of emotional compression, dominate his mind and provide the metrical canon. Not that elizabethans could have spoken as the dramatists made them speak; but even in Marlowe the metrical texture is harmonious with the colloquial exchanges of the day. This ease of utterance reaches its limit in Fletcher, whose comedies by the slightest weaving a lilt into the gay slang of the age produces an anapæstic type of blank verse which seems with its light hurried accent itch to divide into the lyric on the one hand and babbled prose on the other.

yes, yes, and to her face, Sir,
That she is an English Whore, a kind of fling dust,
One of your *London* Light o' Loves; a right one,
Came over in thin Pumps, and half a Petticoat,
One Faith, and one Smock, with a broken Haberdasher;
I know all this without a Conjurer;
Her name is jumping-*Joan*, and ancient Sin-Weaver;
She was first a Ladies' Chamber-maid, there slip'd
And broke her leg above the knee; departed
And set up shop her self. Stood the fierce Conflicts
Of many a furious Term; there lost her colours,
And last ship'd over hither.

In his serious verse he shows a stereotyping approach which hints at the approaching miltonic petrifaction—this in dramas which also reveal the death of the tragic impulse by their change of the marlovian delighting in the hero (*via* the shakespearean bitter ecstasies) into the abstract *admiration*, the glorification of vanity as willpower instead of exposing the secret danger spiritual in every gesture of external domination.

Divine *Andate*, thou that hold'st the reins
Of furious Battels, and disordered War,
And proudly roll'st thy swarty chariot wheels
Over the heaps of wounds and carcasses,
Sailing through seas of blood; thou sure-steel'd sterness,
Give us this day good hearts, good enemies . . .

XIV. The common vitality of this verse (despite this latter weakening) lies in that it never departs from the spoken intonation, its constructions follow an emotional ebb and flow immediately implicit in the statement itself. But this element was completely shattered by Milton, who, eliciting all the latent artificialities of lyrical or narrative elizabethan verse, imposed this, plus rhetorical devices abstractly lifted from greek and latin, on the iambic pentameter. We thus get purely literary blank verse, the meditative fury of which proceeds wholly from the intellect: emotion is there, but distorted, represst into a lie.

Back from pursuit thy Powers with loud acclaime
Thee only extold, Son of thy Father's might,
To execute fierce vengeance on his foes,
Not so on Man: him through their malice fall'n,
Father of Mercie and Grace, thou didst not doome
So strictly, but much more to pitie encline:
No sooner did thy dear and onely Son
Perceive thee purpos'd not to doom frail Man
So strictly, but much more to pitie enclin'd,
He to appease they wrauth, and end the strife
Of Mercy and Justice in thy face discern'd,
Regardless of the Bliss wherein hee sat
Second to thee, offerd himself to die
For man's offence.

What has happened? This is a simple enough passage, the statement is clear, the antiphonic rhetoric at once effective, the cadence gravely persuasive. But read it aloud and it is apparent that no human being ever did or ever could express himself in this manner. Something has got between the thing said and the manner of saying. There is nothing of the immediacy of emotion which make the most tangled or obscure of Shakespeare's emotional outcries and swarming images, passages a hundred times more complex both internally and technically, yet spring to the lips as the natural and inevitable utterance of the drama's intensity.

The metre is then something imposed, inorganic. The emotion is there, but removed, one pace distant. The act of selfknowledge has been tampered with. This is the perfect expression for a man hiding from himself, the antithesis of the expression of a man who seeks to know himself through images begotten of experience. Milton, the hater, the cruel father and husband beneath whose chastity is clearly perceptible the brute, Milton the abstract defender of liberty who hated every manifestation of instinctive life once it came close enough to stir his badconscience—where is this Milton? He is there, ugly enough; but since the Lie is the accepted moral counter in any christian community, that ugly face is of course considered noble, "that incorruptible integrity of soul that has secured for him a reverence accorded to no other poet." Such is the farce of moral values, which has however grown insipid by repetition.

It seems to me that the relation between this metric and the

fact of Milton's blindness has not been sufficiently realised. The nib of the pen, that hypnotic point of subconscious release, was lacking to this poetry brooded upon and hammered out in the darkness of his isolation and torment. How else could such verse be constructed save by a basically artificial balance and compression?

What is most interesting technically is the elaboration of local devices for overcoming monotony, the occasional richness of the elisions and metrical inversions:

> Burnt after them to the bottomless pit . . .
> And made him bow to the gods of his wives . . .

XV. When Dryden comes in 1677 to imitate the shakespearean cadence, he can only produce a sickly echo. Even where the exact shape is reproduced, the effect is somehow marred by an affectation, a shabbied quality as though the miltonic abstraction was so infectious that it deadened by mere proximity. Metre has become so deliberated that when it seeks to find a fluid rhythmic curve its lyricism becomes at once blurred and mechanical:

> *Cæsar* will weep, the Crocodile will weep,
> To see his Rival of the Universe
> Lie still and peaceful there. Ile think no more on't.
> Give me some Musick; look that it be sad:
> I'll soothe my Melancholy till I swell,
> And burst my self with sighing——

XVI. After this there is only the barren miltonic turgidities of the 18th century. Keats in *Hyperion* did little more than inflate the miltonic effect with a faint human flush, making it more rounded: a breath of human symbolism moves among the fine deathly shapes, but cannot fill them with whole life, as Keats knew when he gave up the task and said it was written in the method of art not life.

Wordsworth accepted the Miltonic scheme, threadbared it, and by the infiltration of his thin lyricism at least opened the way for a new colloquial basis of psychological expression. But the form is still far away from the full shakespearean reach.

Byron gave it the first real individual note. He seeks to unite the miltonic rhetoric of grandeur with an easier speech-idiom:

> The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,
> And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;
> Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
> And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropp'd
> They slept on the abyss without a surge—
> The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
> The moon, their mistress, had expired before;
> The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,
> And the clouds perish'd.

But he hints far more successfully at a new idiom in his sardonic note:

> Heroes and chiefs, the flower of Adam's bastards!
> This is the consequence of giving matter
> The power of thought. It is a stubborn substance,
> And thinks chaotically, as it acts,
> Ever relapsing into its first elements.

Well! I must play with other puppets: 'tis
The spirit's pastime in his idler hours.
When I grow weary of it, I have business
Among the stars, which these poor creatures deem
Were made for them to look at. 'Twere a jest now
To bring one down among them, and set fire
Unto their anthill——

Shelley washed about in an excited version of all the contemporary influences; but the result is too thin to form any basis for the future. Beddoes alone took up the full task, amalgamating Byron's idiom of anger and aspiring contempt to a much greater imagic range and absorbing further elizabethan qualities:

I have a bit of *Fiat* in my soul,
And can myself create my little world.
Had I been born a four-legged child, methinks
I might have found the steps from dog to man
And crept into that nature . . .
I found that first
I was but half created; that a power
Was wanting in my soul to be its soul,
And this was mine to make. Therefore I fashioned
A will above my will, that plays upon it——

Unfortunately this great power deliberately suppressed itself. Disgust for an idiotearth and personal despairs which are hinted at by his drunkenness and later homosexuality, embittered Beddoes too far. He gave up earth as a bad job. However his verse remains to show us the whole possible reorganisation of modern speech as the grand manner. So far from being the last of the elizabethans he was the first exponent of the modern drama—a drama still nonexistent however.

XVII. Another frustrated effort, this time to string the grand-image gemlike on a colloquial basis, was made by Alexander Smith:

—The garrulous sea is talking to the shore,
Let us go down and hear the greybeard's speech—
I shall go down to Bedfordshire to-morrow.
Will you go with me?
—Whom shall we see there? . . .
Old Mr. Willmott; nothing in himself,
But rich as ocean. He has in his hand
Seamarge and moor, and miles of stream and groove,
Dull flats, scream-startled, as the exulting train
Streams like a meteor through the frighted night,
Wind-billowed plains of wheat, and marshy fens,
Unto whose reeds on midnights blue and cold
Long strings of geese come clanging from the stars.

Tennyson and Browning built up a tame blank verse out of these elements, both playing for safety—Tennyson for a meek sureness of pictorial effect, Browning for a dulled ease of exposition. However they widened the area of the Keats-Byron-Wordsworth-Beddoes-Smith achievement they were moving away from the centre of concentration, flattening.

XVIII. Into this flatness however William Morris introduced a human intonation, sharpening it by a conscious *naïveté:*

Will this please you,
Unhappy Peter? once a-going home,
Without my servants, and a little drunk,

At midnight through the lone dim lamplit streets,
A whore came up and spat into my eyes,
(Rather to blind me than to make me see),
But she was very drunk, and tottering back,
Even in the middle of her laughter, fell
And cut her head against the pointed stones,
While I leaned on my staff and looked at her,
And cried, being drunk.

The first development on this was made by W. B. Yeats. Using the simplicity he added emotional overtones, enriching the content which for all its feminine implications of fear is suggestive of passionate purposes :

—I weep, I weep because bare night's above,
And not a roof of ivory and gold.
—I would grow jealous of the ivory roof,
And strike the golden pillars with my hands.
I would that there was nothing in the world
But my beloved—that night and day had perished,
And all that is and all that is to be
All that is not the meeting of our lips !
—You turn away. Why do you turn away ?
Am I to fear the waves, or is the moon
My enemy ?
—I looked upon the moon,
Longing to knead and pull it into shape
That I might lay it on your head for a crown.
But now it is your thoughts that wander away,
For you are looking at the sea. Do you not know
How great a wrong it is to let one thought
Wander a moment when one is in love ?
Why are you looking at the sea ?

And Gordon Bottomley, beginning with a distillation, a luscious depth of colour, spread over the naïve accent—the rhythm showing restless delicacies :

I see them by the light of their spread silks
Whose shapes make me restless and hopeless
As their sound would if we touch on a close stair.
They near : I hear the plash of a dipped hand.
O, they slip into starlight which will be
Like frost that cuts the scent in the last roses.
I see dim flowers meet in goldy silks,
And knots of silk dropped over winey silks,
And dimmer meeting faces under silk hair. . . .
—Who spills such kisses from cool brimming lips ?
O, petals creep in my bodice like tickling moths
That woke in a seam when old silks warmed to me.

developed into a more truly taut simplicity :

Come back, come back ; the things I have not done
Beat in upon my brain from every side :
I know not where to put myself to bear them :
If I could have you now I could act well.
My inward life, deeds that you have not known,
I burn to tell you in a sudden dread
That now your ghost discovers them in me.

XIX. Thus far the return to a clarified emotional utterance, a final shedding of the miltonic distortion. But this is not enough. A purification is the first essential ; but that having been achieved we must face the very difficult problem of harmonising the newly discovered emotional directness with on the one side the mass of modern colloquialisms and on the

other side the gorgeous extension of colour-imagery begun by Beddoes and carried through the gaudy rhetoric of Francis Thompson into the explosive nervosities of Edith Sitwell. And further with the emotional candour there must be harmonised the sardonic humours of Byron, the first projection of the complex selfscorn which we must endure and nurture if our delight is to have sincerity.

We see then that the miltonic distortion, evaded in separate issues, yet stands in the way of a synthesis of values. Only one of the elder men, Lascelles Abercrombie, has faced the need of making a relation between the miltonic inverted accent and the speech-rhythm of today. That the task has been too much for him does not lessen the interest of the attempt, which has failed rather from moral cowardice than from any actual technical weakness. Two examples will serve. First of the more colloquial type.

THE WENCH: The bone of you!—Remind me, the next time
I tickle in the small of my back, to take
Your shoulder-blade for a scratching-post—Come round,
Bombasine!—I'd to hurry; I was kept.
Look over me and tell me, is my face
Done all to rights?—What's to do, Missis Eyes?
What's the scare about? It's only paint.
THE OLD LADY: You ought to be ashamed.
THE WENCH: The same to you.
THE OLD LADY: A painted face disgusts me.
THE WENCH: That's because
You couldn't paint your dry old prune of a face,
Not if you were a house-painter.—Have sense,
And don't be a cross-patch: tell me how I look.
THE OLD LADY: How should you look? You look like what you are.
THE WENCH: You don't; you look respectable.
THE OLD LADY: You know
I've got to be here.
THE WENCH: And you know I want to.
We can cry quits.

And this for his more serious type:

SHE: And still no noise! What has come to the sea
To fall in such a soundless spell? The bay
When all the weather's fast in summer drowze,
Still keeps a stir of little combing waves,
Toy surf thudding along the level sand
In pausing midget breakers, sounding like
Round after round of gun-fire miles away.
But silent now as frost!
HE: And a strange thing
That it was all at once, as instantly
As pouncing terror, every noise of water
Froze in the air
SHE: You'd think the sea were dead.
HE: The waters of the sea have died.
SHE: And this
Quiet coiling cold sea-smoke might be
The nature of the putrid underdepths
Come ghostly forth, leaving the waters stricken.

The reason why this method, so much broader in its reach than any of the others, has not been able to concentrate to the required dramatic utterance can only be found in Abercrombie's inability to give himself up to an emotional theme. He chooses theme; is never caught on a tide of selfdefinition, always is warily distinct, the *poeta ex machina* waving a dubious baton in the face of his puppets. The speech arrives at drama only to

find that the characters have mummified. That is the reason why he has kept chiefly to pseudo-philosophic themes, as they are easier to hide in. Only once he let himself go, almost, in the delicious *Phœnix*; but he has steadily shown a respectable repentance since, and so may be dismissed from further consideration.

XX. How then are we to achieve a metrical canon as exact and as elastic as Shakespeare's? It is difficult, for the anapæsts and syncopations which follow any effort to bring-in prose-rhythms tend to become slovenly and break any system. Still, the system can be found if we keep on the track Abercrombie has indicated, moving simultaneously towards a deeper emotional clarity and towards a subtler complication of imagery. It should be possible, if one could train actors to declaim verse intelligently, for such lines as the following by Edgell Rickword to be perfectly intelligible on the stage:

> The gluey envelope of being swirls
> like ink in water and the senses' suit
> soon tears to scarecrow flesh whose flapping rags
> warn blind earth of certain hovering beaks.

The only solution to the modern poetic despair is the verse-drama and the automatic contact with life the stage establishes. Versedrama is going to be produced, or I for one am willing to perish in the attempt; and when produced it will revivify the whole modern consciousness. A profound contribution to the problem has already been made by Philip Owens' *Marlowe*, in which the elizabethan luxury of phrase is married happily to modern slang and the whole constructed half imagically, half expressionistically. Character, despite the vast mass of realistic detail which produces a rich tumbled effect of life, is secondary to the general purpose of igniting dynamitic imagery, creating drama by a violent universal intensification of appetite—the result being a perfectly just restatement of Marlowe in terms of the modern consciousness, forcing the hunger for adventurous experience on a jaded world.

Here is a passage from a drunken scene which must be read in its entirety to see how the exact quickening tempo of drunkenness has been caught—(the Voices represent the sliddery thoughts of the drunkards):

> MARLOWE: Now I would have this present tavern-air
> beat in a fresh vibration with each leafblown song
> put in the winds and all the gentlest cries of lovers
> speaking in gusts, and each brave throaty word
> tempest once more.
> VOICE: When John o' Gaunt was slain or some such thing
> his yelling overturned three troops of pikemen.
> MARLOWE: We must have that—we'll have all battlecries.
> (*Successive imitations, cockcrowings, caterwauling, yodelling, obscure the atmosphere for a minute.*)
> VOICES: You knocked my beer over—I didn't—You did—
> His elbow caught it—No lads he didn't.
> It was a knockkneed battlecry did that
> —I saw it scampering across the room
> fringed with tall glasses like a vat of wine.
> MARLOWE: And we shall know more than was ever known,
> correct surmises on the untold things
> faded in chronicles, unfinished murmurings,
> darknighted whisperings in frozen parks,
> these shall be printed on the sky at night

for us to read out in our pleasure-hours.
We shall be all men, aye, all women too.
SKEERS: Try both sides like the young man in the tale.
MARLOWE: Christ on the cross and Mary on the hill
and Pontius Pilate washing slow his hands.
Sikunder Marlowe should defeat again
Darius Marlowe.
BAINES: You would be Christ you say?
MARLOWE: When I was born there ran a silken river,
a rivulet of fluorspar chased with trees
darkening the stream to polished serpentine—
VOICE: Mate, let me pass, Host, where's the privy?
speaking of streams. (*Someone whistles.*)
I'm not a horse.

All through the play the awakening to an undiscovered world finds an ecstatically bright expression: here Marlowe and Elinor have been discussing the infinite adventures of love, and the strangeness of the earth.

MARLOWE: We'll get up in the early mornings summertimes
from little rooms hanging on foreign rivers
which from the bed where we are loving can be heard
crying as if the streams themselves are being kissed,
as if they felt with us.
ELINOR: Where did you do that?
MARLOWE: And then we'll lean upon the windowsills.
ELINOR: Where did you love a girl like that? above a river?
what was she like?
MARLOWE: She was a Kentish woman living on Bankside . . .
I found her when I first came up to London.
ELINOR: Was she your first girl? did she love you well?
MARLOWE: I can't remember.
ELINOR: O but tell me.
MARLOWE: O she was young and stiff like wood.
Her body couldn't bend, it broke about.
ELINOR: Silly, did you love her much?
MARLOWE: No. I was careless then. One day she asked a fan
as present from me and I thought at once,
the whore wants money from me, gets it back like that.
I never went again. Years after, I was sorry.
ELINOR: Why were you sorry?
MARLOWE: I think she really loved me—and the fan,
she wanted something from me as a woman does
and I was young, it wasn't for the cost,
but I was jealous of a love just for myself.
So I was mean with her.
ELINOR: Yes, you were mean. And did you see her after?
MARLOWE: No, never. Well that's past and . . .
ELINOR: Was she married?

XXI. The game has begun properly. For years the literary pundits have announced that versedrama is as dead as a doornail. Well, we shall have the pleasure of proving them the fools they are. In this exciting age of disintegration and threatening energy, while social novelists wonder how long it will be before the *plebs* very correctly slit their gullets and smash up this dirty christian society, and while gloomy theorists perceive the indisputable decline of the West, and piddling reactionaries raise any banner from Defence of the West to Fascist skull-and-crossbones, we shall not be so optimistic as to expect the cataclysm all the cowards so fear; but we shall continue with this new Renascence of Poetry, creating this new drama of complex subjectivities and sensual delightedness, and backing every effort of the human spirit to affirm its eternal aspiration towards freedom. Our love shall conquer all fear, and all intellectual torment disappear from the reborn body:

XXII.

(The end of a small play entitled POETRY *which takes place in the temple of Venus at Pompeii during the eruption. A poet and his girl (a virgin) have taken refuge there. Venus appears at the girl's prayer.)*

VENUS : You wrong yourself, poor boy. What use were heaven
without an earth ?
POET : O that is true and yet
it does not answer that far angrier question :
What is the use of heaven, there being an earth ?
Can your necessities demand a place
So curiously thick with fools and men
who like to watch a little slavegirl dance
with small spikes going deeper in her feet ?
VENUS : And does that matter ?
POET : No.
GIRL : O but it does.
POET : And neither, Venus, does your heaven matter.
VENUS : The world shall be much worse than it is now
under the welter of this burning dust.
Men shall arise who live on cruelty
like candles coloured with a sick man's breath,
a god upon a gibbet shall be worshipt,
agony shall be preacht in the market-places
and beauty's quiet face scratcht slowly out.
Hate shall be sanctified by strange devices,
all that denies the harsh realities
whose sweetness angers you, all that seeks death
and bleaches life of its significance,
all this shall be proclaimed, and those proclaiming
shall be set up to spit on all who are brave
and love the cross of my embracing body
spread out with open arms upon the grass
more than stiff agonies of the divided self.
Yet poets shall be born, and shall be poets.
Out of this world that shall forget me wholly,
cities of coughing smoke and tiers of wheels
restlessly grinding all the earth away
shall stain the air ; and what you feel today
shall be the common bitterness of minds—
yet men shall live, because men are fools dulled
to any custom, not desiring freedom—
and further, coward who have brought this fate
upon the earth—for in you I address
all of the poets failing into you
and all the thinness of the intellect
laid bare in this clear spasm of rebellious pain,
and so I charge this failure upon you,
out of which shiver all the agonies
I tell you of—yet poets shall be born
and they shall know all things that now you know
and in the end they shall come back to me—
the poets shall come back to me, I know,
despite the coughing ugliness of earth,
despite the cowardice of your gay songs.
POET : Are sad songs braver ?
VENUS : No.
POET : Then what is brave ?
VENUS : Songs gayer than yours ; and yet I do not blame you—

others had failed you, and you did not come
to jar blind cycles back to consciousness.
The tides of death must slime your marble places
before the blood of poetry returns.

POET: Then all the Roman world is doomed?

VENUS: Is doomed.

POET: More reason then that I should still renounce you.

VENUS: But all these worlds are doomed; yet they shall be
reborn for ever.

POET: Yet you come to me
and ask me to kneel down before you—

VENUS: Yes!
before yourself, before your poetry.

POET: All very well. What if I scorn myself?
How can you think that I respect my effort?
How can I take my muddling here so sadly
as to kneel down before the images
I made up from a little sweaty love?
It was a joke, that's all! a very bad one—
but no more seriousness can I now give it.
How can I stride to heaven like a conqueror,
having so gloriously stampt to death
an ant or two? O somewhere in my mind
I know there lies a gesture which refutes
the whole dull madness of earth's poetry;
but what it is I cannot think.

VENUS: Then learn
there is no gesture; for if you could find
a gesture, you would find yourself at once
hurled on my world of wedded faith and act
and so proved doubly mine.
There is but this:
to keep the balance of your selfcontempt
so that the image is not turned awry
when it is struggling into active being.
All intellect is sceptical because
it is the dead space into which delight
leaps at the moment of its sharpest strength.
It is the moment when the bow is drawn
out to its fullest tension—one more throb
and it will snap. That tensity of form
is intellect when truly at its work—
then the wood snaps: the senses splinter away,
the spirit skurries on another chase—
but intellect preserves that moment's tenseness,
spreading it into Time.
It is the poem, the taut web of music
hammered out by my husband secretly
to catch me opened to another's flesh.
Thus intellect is the dead moulding air
objectifying images whose bright rhythm
drips from another source of sweet desire.
But in itself can intellect do nothing
save rage against the hot rhythm using it
and hurling images into this death . . .
that they may live for ever and the self,
feeding on them, may live for ever too.

POET: All that may be, and is—I also know.

But still the knowledge of how poetry's made
cannot explain the scornful scepticism
which, knowing all, yet thinks the game is childish.

VENUS: There is no knowledge, in the last resort,
except within that conflict. From without
knowledge must be despair.

POET: Well, I despair.

VENUS: Your poetry was better than you think,
although not strong enough to rule the mountains,
and you yourself not half the dupe you wish.

POET: Real enough the anger that I feel
at being duped so long, at having drawn
this girl here down to earth to die so hardly.

VENUS: She has her own intention.

POET: But myself—
why should another suffer for my poems?
I do no speak now of the mob, for they
have not yet learned to suffer. But for those
who have already learned all things that pain
can ever teach to man, what use an earth?

VENUS: You'll find the answer soon. What now I say
is that all life were aimless were there not
some point of ultimate contumacy,
some dark opacity behind which spirit
can never pierce unless it should resign
the central fibre of identity.
This darkness is the soul of man, is matter
upon which heaven's foundations may be reared.
You create Evil here . . . is that enough?

POET: Enough, enough, enough! When do we die?

VENUS: Soon. You will see me then again.

POET: I swear——

VENUS: You are mine. I have you in the net. You think
that you can throw your life away as though
it were an apple fallen. You are bound
by many thousand images to me.
Your songs cry out against you. Anger passes,
but not the whole reach of your linkt desires.
I stand above you and I call you on
and you will come to me whenever I call.
You think that you resent my ruthless empire—
no! for you hold me surely as I hold
your poems to me . . . and how then can you tell
which one is calling or what games we play?
Only there is a voice, an answering voice,
two mouths and one desire and then a poem
and then two voices crying from the poem
and you and I are seeking for each other
over again.

POET: I say I shall defeat you.
Here is a gesture that will spoil your tale:
I'll rape this girl here who much adores me.
Here now——

GIRL: You cannot.

POET: Why?

GIRL: Because I love you
and I shall take you to me lovingly.

[*There is a mocking laughter from Venus as she fades away. There is a complete darkness.*]

POET: What can I do? I am so lost . . .
GIRL: Not lost,
for you have me.
POET: O nothing . . what is will?
I have no will and no one has and yet
there is a thing called will. It is desire.
Yet to desire is not sufficient: will
must be its consciousness, and so to be
complete must be the scepticism as well
with which the intellect still taunts at Venus.
O how may I subdue her, how . . . I must.
I must subdue her so that I may love
and yet until I love I may not touch her . . .
Here in a moment we shall perish, both—
and I have but a moment to discover
the gesture which confirms the will for ever.
My poetry is trivial. That I know.
Smoke from the flame but not the heart of flaming.
The flame was truly lighted, that is all—
O not yet deeply enough have I caught life
into the rounding laughter of that statue . . .
How may I make this coupling of flame's oneness
with all my scattering images, and so die?
For then I die quite easily, then minutes
and years are all the same.
GIRL: My dear . . . my dear . . .
have you forgotten that my life is here,
is yours as well as mine, and that it too
is not yet gathered up for you to give me.
POET: O darling, now I know. It is your mouth.
It is your body and your spirit burning
in through your pores to reach your hidden self
the core of images my poetry . . .
You. It is you that I am seeking, love.
Give me your mouth and give me all of you
and let my poetry sink into you
until it and your spirit closing together
pour at one moment to the welcoming womb
of merry beauty. There the rhythm awakes
its shuttle, there the form finds out its mould,
there music spreads the dyes with which it washes
life into subtle colours, washing out
all that is not clear rhythm. And there it is
that I and you are utterly alone,
shutting out gods and mortals both alike,
sucking all essences to make them ours
and yet not clog up our own essences
that mingle and are one and yet create
a world of action infinitely us.
This is your body and my poetry.
GIRL: This is that mirror of poetry my beauty.
POET: And this is life grown love and therefore rising
above the shock of death which here it mimics.

[*There is a terrific roar and then silence for a while. Slowly again a patch of light opens. Venus stands alone, with her head bent down. She lifts her head gravely and with a look of beatific tenderness, then raises her palms aloft in a tender salutation.*]

THE WIDOW OF EPHESUS

by PHILIP OWENS

A dramatic version of the story of the widow in Petronius, and based on the complete translation of the Works by Jack Lindsay. One or two phrases of the translator's, possessing a quiet shuddering virtue of their own, have been lifted.

STAGE.—*A hillside on the outskirts of Ionian Ephesus.*

To the left is an open space with a white temple in the distance. In centre stage front is a tomb cut in the hillside. On the right the path ascends the hill to a spot above and behind the tomb. There are thus three scenes—the open plain, left (1)*; the tomb* (2)*; and the spot on the hill* (3)*. The play takes place at night. Only the scene particular to each incident is then illuminated. The rest of the stage is in darkness. Illumination varies with the scene.*

(1) *The open plain near the tomb. A group of the magistrates of Ephesus, with torchbearers.*

MAGISTRATE ONE: Ionia never knew till now the like
of this fair widow mourning for her man,
who is become a tale all Ephesus
recounts each morning; widows as yet unwived
through long Ephesian evenings will amaze
their not yet married husbands with the pride
of this one widow's constancy.

TWO: When she was still a comely happy wife
my daughters tell me, wondering women came
from far-off villages to catch a glance
of her quiet shuddering virtue.

THREE: This is the very hill where Virgin Mary
led by St. John came to her blessed death
by paths which miss the temple consecrate
to pure Diana. Our city when it chooses
a goddess to adore makes constant choice
of virgins constant to virginity.
Our centuried respect for constancy
keeps Ephesus awake with veneration
for this most constant widow.

FOUR: Men most admire the thing they lack the most
and Ephesus has worshipped Artemis
because she was the only maid authentic.
This widow pale will now become a goddess
dear to Ephesian women labouring
to worship what in practise they unknow.
I give a golden statue to Diana
should this afflicted widow die of grief
for her dead husband. May our deputies
dissuade her from the misery she hugs
and bring her back to happiness. If not,
unhappy though the woman's end be, Ephesus
is greatly richer by a thing unrivalled
in its long history. Let Smyrna try
vainly to circumvent our old supremacy
in wealth and power. We may shortly add
a further virtue to our town of virtue
and constancy in women.

[*Two men come out from the tomb and join the group.*]

FIRST: No arguments of ours could shake her grief,
nor could it be expected when her family

spent anxious days of tears so uselessly.
Her breasts are bruised with beating, she is weak
from fasting; she is inconsolable.

SECOND: So dear to her was that dear husband's bed,
now he has left the bed where they were two
she swears no bed is sweeter than the one
where he is one. She will not leave him.

FOUR: A miracle of constancy is this
and though I sorrow for such virtue lost
to us by virtue dying in her tomb
yet am I happy for this Ephesus.
I weep for her but say for Ephesus,
thou noble wife, in dying thou hast done
more than a thousand widows who remarry.
I shall take steps to have a golden statue.

TWO: She may not die yet for another week.
If so, I do intend my daughters come
to take example by such womanhood.

THREE: Would we had courage to command our wives
see what one wife can offer for a husband!

ONE: I shall take order that this thing is made
into a story for the city's schools.
The least that we can do for any woman
who lays herself within her husband's tomb
for death to be the sole successive lover
is show our civic gratitude by seeing
death does not make possession of her fame.

TORCHBEARER: I left some food and wine outside the tomb.

FOUR: That is an insult to a noble woman
who seeks to die and, eating, cannot die.
Remove it. Give it to the poor.

ONE: No arguments of ours could shake her grief.

[*They go off towards the town.*]

(2) *The door of the tomb opens. The tomb is lit by oil lamps. The widow sits above the coffin. The maid, who is replenishing one of the lamps with oil, stands in the vault door.*

MAID: Those men are now returning to the city.
I see a last torch slanting down the hill.
This is the fifth day we were shut in here
and now I am afraid to leave the tomb.
It seems so cold and open there outside.
Here is some wine beside the door.

WIDOW: Throw it away.

MAID: It is a very little skin of wine.

WIDOW: Throw it away.

[*The girl throws the wine down the hillside.*]

MAID: It looks so large outside I am afraid.

WIDOW: Close the door.

[*The door is shut.*]

(3) *On the hill above lanterns appear. Some men quickly erect crosses. Bodies are seen on them. Groans are heard, but they may come from the tomb. Crucifixion of the thieves finished, the men depart, leaving a soldier as sentinel. The soldier tramps up and down. Then he stops and begins to talk to himself.*

SOLDIER: They laugh at me for talking in the dark.—
What is a man to do left here alone

all night with hanging dead men? I'm a friendly man
and friendly to myself. What better friend
has any man to talk with than himself?
who never interrupts or sulks an answer
or gets afraid of giving confidences;
who's always there too for a lonely man
who may be murdered any minute for a body.
And murder's final. I could never chatter
through a night's service with myself again.
Not that I'd argue with myself at all
if I'd the slightest tiny thing to talk with,
some little creeping crawly conversation.
That day I stood out in the blazing sun
that place in Greece there was a homesick ant
and he and I told stories all day long.
I kept on telling him which way to go
and why and where it went to—all the same,
I wouldn't let him go. If I'd a girl,
one of these brown Ephesian ones, I'd say no word.
At least there's only one word women like.
I never chatter then.—Still all the same
one must be careful what one says alone.
There's nothing here though which could overhear
—I don't mind dead men, they don't really know,
but wood I notice is a fearful thing
for all eavesdropping. That galley I was on
—I never met a ship could hear so much—
one had to go right aft to curse it well.
I always told new comrades where to go
and I'm absolved of blame for what he said,
that huge centurion raw from Germany,
who damned the ship—plunk in its middle too—
wonder we all weren't drowned because of that.
There don't seem any creeping things at night
unless I whack the ground hard with my spear
and make the worms come up. —They're tiresome things
and only twist a conversation round.

[*With his spear point the soldier lifts up the dress of a crucified thief.*]

And that's another sort of worm we have
comes up at times.—
That merchant man I captured in the siege
—gave me those precious stones and let his wife—
he told me worms were everything in fields.
Without the worm there wouldn't be a loaf
or glass of wine for us to fodder with.
Now all these cities I have seen, their walls,
their temples, all their business, their books,
not only that, the very Roman Empire,
where would it be without this sort of worm?
That looks a simple question but how large.
I hear some talk as if big empires grow,
and clever men do clever things at times,
because this god or that god thought it out.
I've heard these mad men come from Palestine

speak of this root of things as if it was
a sort of weed that choked the flowers of earth.
Why don't they cut it off and grow without,
and see how long their holy world goes on?
Old fellow,
none of the gods could say where you were earthe
Right now there must be fragrant women set
in half a dozen places who remember
how strong you grew to them in harvest time,
and would be cold to know how drooped you are.
If you had known how soon your time was up
you would have never left the last of them
but stayed till you were fetched—far better
crucifixion on a woman than a cross.
Why, who's not dead here?

[*He lowers his spear suddenly.*]

Which of you fellows lives?
I thought they strangled you?

[*Moans are heard.*]

Come speak up; I can tell you anything.
The day was warm to-day—the magistrates
are all aquiver with new civic pride
and keep it to themselves—I never said
a thing of you that wasn't flattering.
I saw your size and knew you were a man
of many females.

[*He listens. The soldier with a lantern descends the hill to the tomb. He pushes the vault door and sees two women. The widow is clothed in a mourning robe which leaves her breasts free and is girdled loosely at the waist. The dress is open at the front. The soldier stops. The widow beats her breasts, which are thus attractively bruised. The soldier sits down a minute, then leaves the tomb and goes up the hill. The vault door is left open. A boy and girl come in from the left.*]

BOY: My little sweet one, just a little further
there is a place where no one ever comes.
Men are afraid to come among these tombs.

GIRL: I am afraid too, hold me very tight,
feel how my heart beats. What is that?

[*They see the tomb into which they can look.*]

Is it a vampire? O how beautiful.
She must not see us.

BOY: O she must be the woman all the city
is talking of, the widow who has sworn
to die because her husband lies there dead.
See how she cries and how she beats her bosom.

GIRL (*bursts into tears*):
O let's go back.

BOY: When we are all this long way from the city!

GIRL: My mother O my mother.

BOY: There little dear one just a minute more
—how smooth your heart is—come don't look at her.
I kiss this little spear above your heart.

[*A lantern is seen moving where the soldier is.*]

We can get back before your mother knows.
That's where the thieves are—let us go down here.

[*They go off on the right.*]

Here's a skin of wine.

[*The soldier comes down the hill bringing food and wine. He enters the tomb.*]

SOLDIER: Lady, I beg you not to make your grief
greater than women's grief for men must be.
Lady, I see you kill yourself with misery
that does no good to anyone, neither to you
nor your dead husband. Death's the end of all,
we cannot alter it and must resign
ourselves.
If you die too you let death win the battle
on both sides, when you might have frightened him
into retreat through half a dozen marriages.

[*The widow beats her breasts.*]

How long have you been fasting?

MAID: Now five days.

SOLDIER: Make your mistress eat this bread.

MAID: She will not.

SOLDIER: How beautiful she is! How rich her breasts
in beauty! My heart is torn to see
how cruelly she treats them. What have they done
except make lipless death so jealous of them
that he has underhanded slain his rival?
She is more beautiful for all her fasting—
tearing her hair but shows how strong it is,
weeping her eyes blind shows how long they shine,
though you have oil lamps here as well. Her pallor
and her so languid body seem the swoon
of too much loving. How beautiful she was
when she was happy. Lady, just this.

[*He tries to put bread in her mouth. She refuses.*]

O that I could be loved as you loved him.
Why should you lay in earth a gift like yours
of such high loving? Do men who can rule empires
cast power away because one city does revolt?
how many men remain for you to love,
beautiful lady!

[*The soldier almost accidentally upsets wine near the maid.*]

Yes, girl, that is the finest wine on earth,
its smell alone is better than a meal.
Here, have some of it.

[*He forces some on the maid, who drinks a little.*]

But it is strong, so take some bread as well.

[*The girl eats.*]

Why won't your mistress be as sensible?
She has a land of beauty to restrain
from death's mismanagement, and should eat well
to hold together so much empired beauty.
Some more? that's a good girl.

MAID: Mistress, dear mistress, drink a little wine.
And here is corn.
Ah, he is right, why should you force your soul
out of your body till love takes it from you?

SOLDIER: Your body is so wonderful no soul
should ever want to leave it.

MAID: I am not learned in steep argument
but I recall a verse that seems to hand:
Thinkst thou a corpse or some penned airy spirit
is straining ears to catch this vaulted woe?—
What are we doing here in this damp tomb
when daylight is encamped above our heads?
This so dead body should be all you need
to satisfy you of your foolishness.
You must be thirsty.
[She forces her mistress to sip a little wine. After some hesitation the widow eats a little, then more.]
That's all, pity we threw away the other wine.

SOLDIER: What wine?

MAID: I threw some down the hill.

SOLDIER (*takes his lantern*):
I'll look for it.
[He comes out of the tomb and goes off right.]

MAID: O mistress I am glad the soldier came.
How strong and tall he is, I had forgotten
what men looked like.

WIDOW: No man could ever be what my man was.

MAID: How do you know? You haven't tried the others.

WIDOW: I was a virgin when I went to him
and he was gentle as another woman.
All of my skin is coloured with the nights
we lay together. Oh oh oh. The words he said,
the dearest touches and the way he stood
before he came to me.

MAID: But all that is the same with any man
whose blood is ours.

WIDOW: There is no man can make me stammer out
so tenderly my heart. *[The soldier returns.]*

MAID: Why do you smile sir soldier?

SOLDIER: I found the wine and also something else
embedded on a tombstone soft with moss,
but when I saw just what it was was there
I didn't grumble that the wine was gone.
No, nothing but two little sleeping lovers
who woke and she cried out: O Artemis.
I reassured them I was not a wraithe
come for revenge on her lost virgin vows.
They did not care much for the dead men round
and they were right. I knew a fellow once
who had made love in every sort of place
and he swore there was nothing better than
a graveyard for the sweeter turns of love.

MAID: There is a lesson for you mistress

SOLDIER: Why should you think all love is in the grave
because one lover lies there? beautiful
you are, how beautiful your face.
What would that grow to in this mouldy cell?

MAID: And I will show you more, brave soldier.
[She bends over her mistress and pulls open the dress of the widow, who is too weak to struggle. She makes a vain attempt and then lies naked panting.]

SOLDIER : And she would give this smoothness to the grave ?
O never have I seen such form in flesh
so wantonly bound over to the soil.
[*He approaches to look.*]
The way you moved then to avoid my gaze
was beauty unavoidable. Your thighs
droop from your hips as though reluctantly
they leave the centre of their pleasure once
MAID : Now there, look at her—no you cannot move.
SOLDIER : How you have bruised those lovely breasts as slaves
who disobey your heart's desire to die !
See, they rebel against your cruelty
as soon as any friendly hand is laid on them
to cover up their bruises. Those tender marks
betray the whiteness you would have forgotten.
And you would let this mole set on your thigh
as sentinel against the wind's quick rape
of dearer beauty desert its service true
for this allegiance with the rascal tomb.
The woman's mad. Look how this flower grows
with grace of all its early blossom yet untouched
and you would close its petals with the night
of death, the most unhusbandlike of lovers,
who leaves you if he finds a fairer girl.
WIDOW (*sitting up and arranging her dress*) :
You shall be beaten when you get home girl.
SOLDIER : No, beat me for I am the cause
She showed me you, you cannot be ashamed
no, you are pleased I know how beautiful
you are.
WIDOW (*tears out some hair and sprinkles it over the corpse*) :
Forgive the wicked woman crying here
for you dear husband.
SOLDIER : He may have heard your slightest whisper once
with glad obedience. Though you cry your heart out
he'll not hear now.
WIDOW : Forgive me husband for the creeping thoughts
against which woman's flesh is unavailing.
No man, however handsome, shall have me.
SOLDIER : I'll tell you what it is when husbands die.
First their throats tighten and they cannot speak,
and they grow chilly from the footsole up—
then they grow deaf and then hear not at all,
and then are blind and cannot see that they
are no more in their body. Spirits dead
are less than little raindrops in the night.
WIDOW : Why do you tempt me soldier to this thing ?
SOLDIER : I only seek to tempt you from your death.
Suppose he sees and hears you in this moment,
suppose he saw our bodies long entwined ;
being a ghost he won't know what it is.
When he has laid his body where it is,
he lays all understanding of the body down.
You know how children cannot understand the thing

that brings more children into bodied girls.
They are half spirits with an old disgust
for such strange matters. Not till they are grown
and flush their bodies with a newmade blood
do they come naturally to their love.
The body teaches what the body can.
When lad I looked at girls I knew and thought;
how can this girl, so slight, so chaste, so maid,
be brought without her death to play with that.
And yet they all, the gentlest, came to that.
So, for your spirit husband in the tomb,
being without a body he'll not know
what is it that he sees your body do,
and look uncomprehending as a child
at dogs.—That's right, now you are eating.—
Besides, suppose he saw and knew it all;
if I died I would like my wife to show
what I had taught her to some living men,
and not restage our passion with my ghost.
You don't teach boys their Latin and their Greek
and then forbid them use the language learnt.
How then, the sweetest language women speak,
which you have mastered to a fluency,
must now remain unspoken since the man
with whom you used to speak is deaf and dumb?
and you forbidden to all dialects
the simplest cowherd mutters?
His spirit, bodiless and cold with death,
in seeking shelter will be drawn to you,
to your warm spirit by some spirit path
unfelt by bodies. How can he visit you
or sightless recognise you if your heart
is not as singing as it used to be
when he was with you? Love another man
and he will recognise who loved him too.
Don't close your comfort to your very husband.

MAID: Mistress, the young man speaks the truth.

WIDOW: But I am tired and I will sleep awhile
if you will let me soldier have your cloak
upon the ground. There, on the other side.
It's cold for you to stand out in the night,
you may remain here. Shut the door.

[*The maid comes forward and shuts the door. A searchlight swings three times from left to right of the stage at intervals of a minute. In this way three days give way to the last night. In the meantime the soldier often goes up to the crosses, and even to the town to buy presents, but his passages are so swift in the heightened movement of time that they are unnoticed. Lights are seen on the hill. Men are taking one of the bodies off its cross. They take the body away. The soldier comes out of the tomb and ascends the hill. A minute later he returns hurriedly.*]

SOLDIER (*drawing out his sword*):
Goodbye, fair lady, I am doomed.

WIDOW (*catching hold of his arm*):
What spirit have you seen?

SOLDIER : One of the bodies has been taken down.
A thief is missing, his relatives
have buried him. I cannot wait
courtmartial and deserter's death. Goodbye.
I will anticipate the end with my own sword.
Dear lady leave me—better clear a space
where a dead lover can adorn the side
of your dead husband.
WIDOW : But does it matter if a body goes ?
SOLDIER : I shall be slain for that.
MAID : Yes, they kill men for that.
WIDOW : O I am slain if I must live to see
the only two men I shall ever love
both dead within one tomb. The gods forbid
that any virtuous woman should allow
a living man to thrust himself on death
while there's a dead one to suffice for that.
MAID : There's no great need to be too fair with death.
WIDOW : Tie up my husband in the brigand's place.
MAID : Yes, soldier you must help us take him up.
That is the only way to save you now
for my dear lady's future happiness.
SOLDIER : Were I religious I should say it was
a nemesis on me.
WIDOW : You take his feet.

[*The dead man is extracted from his coffin and the two women and the soldier carry the body up the hill. By lantern light they are seen tying the dead man on the empty cross. Their lantern slowly comes down the hill.*]

EPILOGUE

MEETING OF THE CHRISTIANS OF EPHESUS

Brethren, it doth appear the governor
crucified Christians in mistake for thieves—
an error common to our persecutors.
Thus martyrised was a respected brother
not long from Antioch whose faith in Christ
was such that on the third day he arose
and left his cross to sit among the saints.
And for a testimony of this miracle
fetched up a dead man walking from his tomb
who crucified himself for love of God
and this departed martyr. The collection plate. . . .